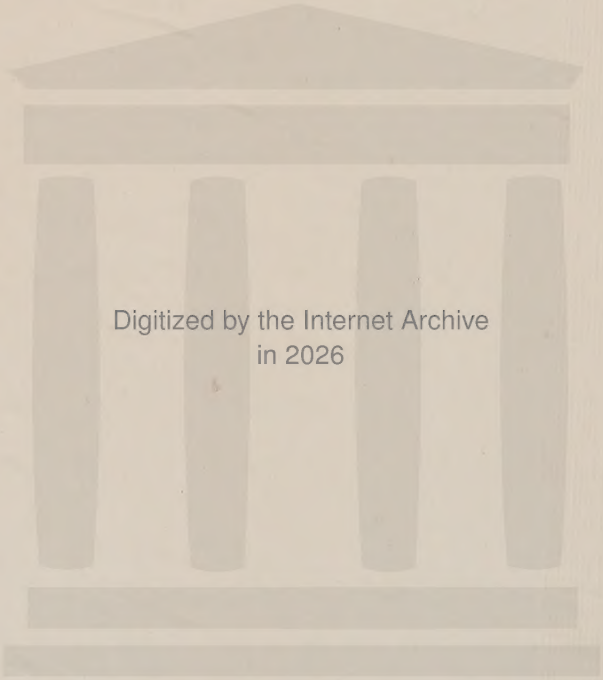
ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

BY

JAMES AGATE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ALARUMS & EXCURSIONS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

L. OF C. (LINES OF COMMUNICATION)
BUZZ, BUZZ! ESSAYS OF THE THEATRE
RESPONSIBILITY. A NOVEL

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

BY

JAMES AGATE

Ah ! je vous reconnais, tous mes vieux ennemis !
Le Mensonge ? Tiens, tiens ! Ha ! ha ! les Compromis,
Les Préjugés, les Lâchetés ! . . . Que je pactise ?
Jamais, jamais ! Ah ! te voilà, toi, la Sottise !
Je sais bien qu'à la fin vous me mettrez à bas ;
N'importe : je me bats ! je me bats ! je me bats !
(*Cyrano fait des moulinets immenses*)

ROSTAND.

LONDON
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1922

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TO

C. E. MONTAGUE

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A Cartel to Modesty

HAM. Then saw you not his face?
HOR. O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.
Hamlet, Act i., sc. 2.

HOW many things are there," says Verulam, "which a man cannot, with any face or comeliness, say or do himself!" "It has often been remarked," echoes Professor Raleigh, "how few are the story-tellers who can introduce themselves, so much as by a passing reflection or sentiment, without a discordant effect." Now I, the meanest of guests at the table of the rich, holding out promise of entertainment that I may dine, make bold to blame the host who should deprive me of the string upon which I harp best. What more fittingly becomes the critic, recounting after dinner the story of his likes and dislikes, than his challenging "I want this," and "I won't have that"? There is no mock-humility about the great in this line. It is not the modesty of Lamb, the bated breath of Hazlitt nor the whispering humbleness of Leigh Hunt which are the strength of these authors. Shyness is the small change of their agreeableness. And yet I would not wish to have seen these egoists in the flesh. Neither do I long to behold, bodily, their successors of to-day. These, too, shall be the magnificent selves of their writings. The peacockery[1] of that prince of dilettanti, Mr Max Beerbohm—let me have no pretence of intimacy—has always called to mind the burnished,

[1] I confess to long consideration of this word and that for six months "coxcombry," in the Maxian sense, stood in its place, to be softened after one more reading of *William and Mary*, perhaps the most affecting and most beautiful, certainly the simplest, short story in the English language.

dandiacal little fellow who, in the bootmaker's show-case, enthuses over Meltonian boot-polish. And in that configuration of him I would die. Once in the theatre I sat next to a famous critic, revered from childhood, to find that he slept throughout a French comedy of some sparkle. In the intervals, during which the great man stirred to wakefulness, I would have sought speech but for the fear of interrupting a scholarly re-perusal of *The Decline and Fall*. Once I was placed next to Mr Shaw, and lo, instead of the fire-eater, a kindly gentleman gravely a-twinkle, perilously like the "bearded lady" of Rodin's effigy. I go in fear of meeting Mr Walkley, whose prose so dazzles that it may only be read through smoked glasses, lest the spoken word prove less than unbearable. I am in terror lest proximity reduce the girth of Mr Chesterton. "It is strange," muses M. France's immortal dog, "how as objects approach I get smaller, and as they recede I get bigger."[1] It would be a terrible disillusion for the Riquet in us to find that as Mr Chesterton drew near we did not grow less. I have never been one to suffer mortification; determined always that great men shall be of the stature of their works. It has been my privilege to escape contact with the important of this earth. Once, at the opening of the Jubilee Exhibition, I trespassed to within two paces of a Stout Gentleman and his Lady. As a small boy exploring the House of Commons, I accidentally butted into Mr

[1] Adapted.

Labouchère. I have survived an over on the sands from Dr Grace. At Olympia I have stumbled over the legs of Mr Joseph Beckett. Unwillingly was I presented to a Helen of the boards whose beauty was to youthful eyes, oh, ever so much more than fabled barks. Once I met Réjane, and found her a competent body with no halo of artistry. . . . It had been wiser to refrain from these encounters, so true is it that "the manna of greatness may be lost in the leaven of habit."

For as politicians have their public and their private codes of honour, so writers have their public and their private personalities. It was objected of Sir Isaac Newton and Mr Locke that "beyond their contents there is nothing personally interesting in the men." Is it possible that this must of the great be ever true? I fear it, I promise you, since of a modern philosopher it is written, "One expected him as a voluminously bearded Jew, with a vast forehead, bright, sparkling eyes, and a certain obscurity of manner, for this, according to the conventions which mould our views, is the successful Continental professor from east of the Rhine. Instead, there walked on to the crowded platform a rather tired-looking schoolmaster in middle age, clean-shaven but for a moustache, and indifferently dressed." Of this aspect of truth I am shyer than I am of Einstein himself.

It would seem that we are here to reconcile two propositions which would appear at first sight to be mutually destructive. The first is the right of the artist to sink the individual, to

be known by his artistry alone. The actor shall be such as his characters are on the stage, the author such as his works reveal him; and though both use the parade and glory of art to trick out the plain citizen it shall not be accounted vanity. The second proposition is the right of actor and author to make all possible play with the first person singular. This is an apparent opposition; in reality there is no see-saw. For just as the first condition of the actor's art is that the instrument upon which he plays shall be himself, so is the instrument of the critic his wide-flung, uncompromising egoism. But, again, this egoism is no more than the "idea" of a personality which the writer, consciously or unconsciously, has woven for you in the texture of his book. He does not buttress opinion with matters outside the reader's concern, the number of his town and country houses, his tale of plate and linen. His prestige is in the written page, not in himself. "Elia," at odds with the Scheme of Things, may urge a gentle displeasure which had been impious in the India House clerk. "But," objects the reader, "it is to 'Elia' and not Charles Lamb that the essays are ascribed by their author." I pray the reader, therefore, to substitute for the name on my cover that of N. or M., John Doe or Richard Doe, or such fantasy as shall please him. And I, John Richard Doe, N. or M., claim the right to confront my reader in my own person as often as shall please me.

The Decay of Criticism

Those who will not stoop to the baseness of the modern fashion are too often discouraged. Those who do stoop to it are always degraded. MACAULAY.

MANY can write books, few can choose titles. I had long meditated a work upon stage players across whose cover should gleam, streamer-wise, "Lord, what Fools these Actors be!" A list of names was to follow. Why should the devil have all the best tunes? Why should the railway bookstalls sell nothing but rubbish? Were it not an act of high morality to bluff the traveller for his own good? Why should not the dull fellow, allured by spicy prospects of detraction, insure himself against tedium in a company with a highly fraudulent prospectus? What care I though he pitch me out of window at the first hint of disillusion? Is there not just a chance that before it comes to the pitching we shall stumble, he and I, upon some common delight? And for a dull critic to proclaim, and a dull reader to reaffirm, a common joy marks an epoch in the education of both. It was the fear of libel actions which turned me from this fine fling. I made tentative alterations: "Lord what Fools . . ." and a quite cryptic, ". . . These Actors be." But I could not rid myself of the feeling that in the Law Courts it is the letter and not the spirit which prevails. A Puckish extravagance, I should have pleaded; hyperbole in Macaulay's sense of lying without intention to deceive, defamation without intent to defame.

No actor, I would have agreed, is a fool save in a way of folly presently to be explained. Yet that there must be something of this in his make-up it were only reasonable to suppose. How else, the law of averages holding, and the actor's theatrical genius knowing neither measure nor containment?

A commonplace of all who write about actors is their brief continuance, the transitoriness which is the essence of their glory. They are your true ephemera. Astronomers leave behind them new stars, explorers new continents, statesmen new measures, politicians old speeches; philosophers bequeath us their speculations, poets their verses; even my lord the newspaper-proprietor prints trivialities on the sands of time—records of net sales graven upon the Margate shore. Whereas the actor dazzles and is gone, his cometary stuff his own body. There is no elixir, you would say, which may prolong the illusion of his being, nor endow him, once departed, with the faculty of having been. Yet there is a little breed of men who would ensure that the memory of great acting shall outlive the actor—aye, and for more than half-a-year. These are the dramatic critics, monumental masons whose works are headstones. The dear simplicity of actors consists in their scorn of these their epitaphers and memorialists, in their disregard of those who would ensure for them a *terrain à perpétuité*. For this, at least, is in the gift of the critic.

The Decay of Criticism

"It matters nothing whether your criticism be written well or ill; tell me how I acted!" is said to be the actor's demand. As well might the critic retort: "It matters nothing how you mow and gibber; leave your damnable faces and let the author speak." The quarrel is the old one as to the function of criticism. Is it demanded and who is it that demands, that the theatrical "notice" shall be purely informative, determinative of the busy man's choice of distraction? Is it to be a compendium of the plot, a list of players and a computation of recalls? Must it resolve itself into an appreciation of the dresses, a bill of the celebrities in the boxes, a note of the gallery's behaviour? I do not say that such a hotch-potch were out of place in some part of a newspaper: it is, after all, a kind of news. But for the recording thereof there are news-reporters and news-columns.

The relations of the critic are fourfold. There is the relation to the intelligent reader, and I am not persuaded that there is no public for something different from mere reporting. There is the relation to the theatre-managers, and I am not convinced of the insistence of these gentlemen that the opinions which they have invited shall be non-critical. But neither of these is my immediate point. My concern is with the relation there might be between critic and dramatist and critic and actor were not the newspaper-editor ever in the way. Have not they, actor and dramatist, the right to demand that the critic

matched against them shall be of their fellows, a craftsman at his own trade, a conscious as well as a conscientious artist? This is not a counsel of perfection. *La plus belle fille ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a*; no writer can give beyond his talent. The difficulty is still with the newspapers, the obtaining of editorial consent to the functioning of that talent according to its degree. Even though the journalist, be he critic or reporter, perceive that a different handling is required as between a new Hamlet and a speech at the Mansion House, there remains always his chief to be circumvented. That battles are won by the common soldier and not by the general will always be true of the newspaper world. With a few rare and honourable exceptions, the finest criticism has always been achieved in the face of higher authority; even the best of editors may be screwed up to the courage of your fine midnight assault upon established reputation because the hour is too late for timidity. When, recently, a company of players from the Comédie Française visited London the programme contained a reference to G. H. Lewes—"one of the half-dozen really inspired critics of the drama and of acting." How many London papers, one asked oneself, would open their columns to-day to any "inspired critic" should such an one arise? Criticism is at a discount; it is a drug in the market, a waste of space. *The Times* frankly admits that "The theatre has meant

nothing to England. It has been no part of our life. We have no genius for the theatre. We make an 'amusement' of it, it is true, and a great industry. But we have not made it even an amusement with the dignity and the passion of the drama enjoyed by nations with a genius for the theatre." The attitude of the Press itself has changed during the last twenty years, for in place of the old obligation to lead public taste the modern urgency is to pursue it. The Press has descended from criticism of books to personalities about authors; from criticism of actors to chatter of the wings. When formerly a great actor arose the polite world held its breath until a Hazlitt, a Lewes, or even a Clement Scott had pronounced judgment. But the acting of the actor is no longer supposed to be the reader's concern. He is offered, in place of criticism, irrelevant gossip after the manner of the servants' hall.

Newspaper criticism is divided to-day into two distinct kinds. The first wears the old air of erudition and authority which serves to conceal or, perhaps, to betray a well-bred indifference; it is become a livery of pure tedium. One must suppose thirty or forty years of writing about the London theatre to have induced in the finer sort of critic a weariness too jaded even for indignation; the sight of the most polished of light comedians [1] crawling on his stomach about a bedroom floor no longer stirs him to protest. The

[1] Mr Charles Hawtrey in *Up in Mabel's Room.*

second is not criticism at all. It consists of a bald statement of the plot of the play, a denuded account of the acting, and a rapturous tale of the reception. The whole under twenty lines. The best that can be said of such criticism is that it is strictly non-committal. In many papers the dramatic criticism is entrusted to the hack whose job it is to concoct the daily or weekly column of theatrical "news." Now either the weekly gossip-column is made up of paragraphs sent in by the theatrical Press-agent, unaltered and pinned together, or it is not. In the first case these paragraphs are simple advertisements and should be paid for as advertisements and the public notified that they are advertisements. The second case presupposes some sort of editing.

A critic who is entrusted with the work of criticising actors who are artists must necessarily be an artist himself. Not even your lordliest polypapist[1] will deny this. Justifiable, therefore, would be the employment of an artist to sub-edit gossip were the intention to discard the chaff and use only the grain. But it is clear that what is demanded is not the sifting of an unconscionable amount of trash, but its increase. From which it follows that an artist is the last person to be chosen. If the sifter's mesh be fine, he is useless to his paper in the vulgar capacity; if it be coarse, he cannot have fineness of discrimina-

[1] We have the authority of a highly critical review for taking this word to mean "an owner of many papers" and not "a believer in many popes."

tion and should not be employed as critic. No critic should be asked to puff, nor, being asked, will so betray his function ; whilst it is unfair to demand of the strenuous news-monger that he shall have a mind for values. Pedlars should stick to their wares.

There is yet one other way of concocting a gossip-column, a way one shrinks from examining too closely. This is the method of first-hand collection. Imagination boggles at the thought of a "really inspired critic" hanging over bars, toadying to managers, bribing the call-boy, confabbing with underlings—the whole art and science of the tout. How otherwise can these sly-boots justify their salaries? If the theatre-manager wants it to be known that *Miss Biddy from Bideford* is giving place to *Miss Babs from Babbicombe* there are the drum and cymbals, siren and foghorn of the Press-agent ready to his hand. If the manager does not want the tremendous secret to be known, what is there but treachery in these mischievous flutings? It is difficult to justify the collective or inventive gossip. Either he is pure busybody, or the theatrical publicity-monger is a less communicative person than one thought. Were I an actor, I should immensely resent being criticised at night by a spy who had spent his morning at the keyhole. It is not the eavesdropping to which I should object but the mentality of the eavesdropper.[1]

[1] I have never, to my knowledge, set eyes on a professional gossip-monger who wormed out his own secrets. If it be proved that there are such

What one would, of course, unhesitatingly condemn would be that any Press-agent in the pay of a theatrical management should be engaged as dramatic critic on the staff of a newspaper. Against this it may be argued that a man cannot live by dramatic criticism alone, and that it were unjust he should be debarred from exercising his talents in a collateral interest. Let there be no misunderstanding. I do not say that both functions may not be discharged with honour by the same person. I do say that no considerate editor would put his critic into the difficult position of having to notice the productions of his theatrical employer. Not even in the theatre can a man serve two masters. It were no answer to say that in such a case the critic would be absolved from noticing the performance he is paid to puff in another column, and that some other representative of the paper would be sent. He would still have to notice the productions of his employer's rivals. Here again I do not say that the most perfect fairness might not be maintained. The point is that the position is one of extreme delicacy for the critic and that the public should be made aware of the delicate position. At the head of every newspaper criticism written by a theatrical Press-agent the reader should be notified as follows :—

Mr X. is the accredited Press-agent of Messrs A. B.

people and that their profession is one of distinction and honour, I will persuade my publisher to print a second edition of this book that the necessary correction may be made.

and C. The Daily Lynx *submits Mr A.'s opinions of the productions of this and other managements in the perfect persuasion*[1] *of his critical honesty.*

But to find the real trouble we must go very much deeper. The real trouble is that the Press-agent, being a man of the theatre of the same order as the producer, sees the theatre from the inside, in terms of the producer's "effects." He knows the lath and plaster too well to see the structure as a whole, is too intimate with the bricks and mortar of make-believe to come with fresh eyes to reality and truth. The attitude of the fine critic must always be one of complete detachment. For him the play's the thing; no other consideration may come within his ken. His province is the relation between art and life. For him the intercourse and traffic of the players, the inner workings of the stage, do not exist. For him the curtain rises upon the unknown, and descends upon a world that has ceased to be. The "inspired" critic of former days relied upon his taste. He who to-day should plead long apprenticeship to the study of the drama, a feeling for acting and some fastidiousness of style would be hounded out of Fleet Street. No! the word's too strong, and presupposes *moral* indignation. He would be gently laughed out of the office. That there is not a larger body of considered judgment of the theatre, the work of fine minds, is the fault of those who harry taste

[1] If the editor be in good heart he may go as far as "full conviction."

down the public street and woo her at every corner.

And all because of the crazy notion that there is no middle way between the "highbrow"[1] and the no brow at all, that the writer who is master of his subject is necessarily unreadable and that the public will steadily refuse to have anything to do with the brains of others or to use its own. What, under these conditions, becomes of my plea for the critic as artist? First let us suppose that the newspapers are not what we know them to be. Then let us decide what exactly is an artist, be he painter, poet, musician, critic, mime. I cannot, I think, do better than quote a passage which every actor and every dramatic critic should know by heart. It is to be found in *The Manchester Stage, 1880–1900.* This little book is now very difficult to obtain and I make no apology for giving the passage here. It is by C. E. Montague.

"What *is* an artist? What, exactly, is it in a man that makes an artist of him? Well, first a proneness in his mind to revel and bask in his own sense of fact; not in the use of fact—that is for the men of affairs; nor in the explanation of fact—that is for the men of science; but simply in his own quick and glowing apprehension of what is about him, of all that is done on the earth or goes on in the sky, of dying and being

[1] This objectionable word has been debased, if it could be debased, to mean not only the super-intellectual and hypercritical, but also, in the case of writers, whosoever retains a sense of the decency and dignity of letters.

born, of the sun, clouds, and storms, of great deeds and failures, the changes of the seasons, and the strange events of men's lives. To mix with the day's diet of sights and sounds the man of this type seems to bring a wine of his own that lights a fire in his blood as he sits at the meal. What the finest minds of other types eschew he does, and takes pains to do. To shun the dry light, to drench all he sees with himself, his own temperament, the humours of his own moods—this is not his dread but his wish, as well as his bent. 'A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.' 'You shall see the world in a grain of sand And heaven in a wild flower.' This heightened and delighted personal sense of fact, a knack of seeing visions at the instance of seen things, is the basis of art.

"Only the basis, though. For that art may come a man must add to it a veritable passion for arresting and defining in words, or lines and colours, or notes of music,[1] not each or any thing that he sees, nor anybody else's sense of that thing, nor yet the greatest common measure of many trained or untrained minds' senses of it, but his own unique sense of it, the precise quality and degree of emotion that the spectacle of it breeds in him and nobody else, the net result of its contact with whatever in his own temperament he has not in common with other men. That is the truth of art, to be true less to facts without

1 The actor was not specifically in the writer's mind or he would have added accent and gesture.

you than to yourself as stirred by facts. And truth it must be with a vengeance. To find a glove fit of words for your sense of 'the glory and the freshness of a dream,' to model the very form and pressure of an inward vision to the millionth of a hair's breadth—the vocabulary of mensuration ludicrously fails to describe those infinitesimal niceties of adjustment between the inward feeling and the means of its presentment. . . .

"'There are no beautiful thoughts,' a fastidious artist has said, 'without beautiful forms.'[1] The perfect expression *is* the completed emotion. So the artist is incessantly preoccupied in leading his sense of fact up to the point at which it achieves not merely expression but its own completion in the one word, phrase, line, stanza that can make it, simply as a feeling of his own, all that it has in it to be. He may be said to write or paint because there is a point beyond which the joy of tasting the world about him cannot go unless he does so; and his life passes in a series of moments at which thought and expression, the sense of fact and the consummate presentation of that sense, rush together like Blake's 'soul and body reunited,' to be indistinguishably fused together in a whole in which, alone, each can attain its own perfection."

I cannot think that the actor will cavil at this exposition of what artistry means to him. Nor can I think that he will willingly offer his art

[1] A fastidious critic of acting will say that there can be no beauty of conception without beauty of execution.

to shafts less nobly winged. I do not believe that he desires the commendations of unlettered boors. If the actor be the artist I take him for, he will demand that criticism of his acting shall assume the colour of his acting. To do this effectively the critic must be artist as well as reporter. If the critic be the artist I take him for he will hug the ground of plain fact in so far as he is under the necessity of recording the player's accent and gesture, his treatment of line and scene; but he will also take to himself wings with which to beat the air of the actor's inspiration. He will insist that you read not between his lines but above them. Am I asked to give examples which fulfil these two functions? This is a fair challenge and I will meet it fairly. I will take four criticisms—three of living players and one of a great Frenchwoman recently dead. It is from the columns of a great provincial paper that I take them.

Of Mrs Patrick Campbell[1]:

"The Lady Ellingham of the play is animated by Mrs Campbell into one of the women whom she acts as a class rather than individually—so that her acting almost seems like an argument, a theory of femininity, like Matthew Arnold's about 'things that live and move Mined by the fever of the soul.' Like her Mariana, her Paula, her Beata, so her Lady Ellingham seems, behind all that she directly says, to be asserting the title

[1] By C. E. Montague.

of a certain temperament to more of the good things of the emotional world than it commonly gets; the appealing lassitude, the quick untruthfulness, the troubled and plaintive tenderness all seem like changing modes following some one quest, and the impression is never stronger than in those passages of listening to long speeches by others in which Mrs Campbell, usually sitting in profile with outstretched neck, gives so wide a range of expressiveness to the mere act of attention. She can listen as articulately as many actors can speak; within the limits of silence she attains the diversity and intensity of emotional significance that brings her art near to the delicacy achieved by Maeterlinck in his."

Of Miss Irene Vanbrugh[1]:

"She is far the best of English actresses at expressing a certain kind of salt, sane, wayward honesty of ill-will and generosity, the temper that jumps in a semi-calculable way up and down the whole scale of equity and magnanimity, from uncompromisingly Mosaic doctrines of an eye for an eye to super-Christian prodigies of self-sacrifice. Small shame to her that this time she does the Old Testament ethics the better of the two, for Mr Pinero does them vastly better. Indeed the whole theory of retaliatory justice, with its set contrasts and its spirit of pat, triumphant repartee, is much more easily dramatised than the mild, blond sort of moral beauty

[1] By C. E. Montague.

that answereth not again. The vivacity with which Miss Vanbrugh's Nina routed the advanced guard of Hilary Jesson's heavy brigade of arguments for the wearing of haloes did good to the natural man in all of us, though there were other and less momentous moments at which her art was even finer. Like Irving and Bernhardt, she can shout through a door into a passage in a way that turns scenery real, or sit dead still in a room full of people and turn the rest into faint sketches, so importunate is the sense she conveys of the greater authenticity and vehemence of her own emotions."

Of Mr Arthur Bourchier[1]:

"Mr Bourchier sees in Macbeth a human creature, and he plays it humanly. He does not project himself into the grandiose tradition, and his performance, fine and imaginative as it was, appeared deficient in that it hardly gave us the thrill of something transcendent or aloof. Sometimes it seemed to ground on prose, and it did, now and then, decline into conventional declamation. Of course one must disagree with details. We look in vain for anything in the text to justify the extraordinary nervous breakdown in the scene before Banquo's murder, and if in this the actor is preparing us for the great paroxysms of the next scene he has gone beyond Shakespeare, who terrifies him with an honest Ghost, and no mere subjective apparition. If Mr

[1] By A. N. Monkhouse.

Bourchier is wrong here, however, he is wrong deliberately and ingeniously; his reception of the news of the Queen's death seems rather the acceptance of convention—the human convention. A man must be overcome by the news of his wife's death even if Shakespeare has taken pains to show us that he was not. Yet nothing in the play seems more illuminating than Macbeth's indifference under the stress of his tremendous preoccupation. He is concerned with himself, his life, his fate; his wife has been left behind in the race, and her death is merely another starting-point for the philosophisings of the insatiable egoist. Life has lost its savour, but it is still worthy of comment by one who tastes it like a poet. If Mr Bourchier did not make a great spirit of Macbeth, he did present a real personality. When Macbeth must, by the terms of his part or the tradition from which no actor can set himself free, strike a key violently unnatural Mr Bourchier conformed to the necessity ungraciously. In his dealings with the witches there was no attempt at Irving's subtle note of scepticism, but even with such a concession to the modern spirit the witches of the stage are anachronisms; this great play has not weathered evenly."

Of Réjane[1]:

"Paris has buried Réjane with the infinite regret due to any artist who can do any one

[1] Presumably Montague, from the style.

thing, however limited, uniquely well, so that the artist's death is a diminution, for the time being, of the world's power of seeing itself. Réjane's acting showed us the most primitive and physical of emotions worked up to their last subtleties of quiet finesse. Her genius was sex bejewelled with every invention of cunning and charm that in civilised history—perhaps long before—the instinct has forged for its harmony, so that you felt she was the last, up to date, of the line of Helen and Sappho and Queen Cleopatra and Mary Stuart, and all the women famous in history for womanishness. The craft which spoke in her voice and her eyes was the sum and perfection of what, in all but the most noble ages, most men have wished women to have instead of high intellect. Perhaps her virtuosity was greatest when she was vulgar, as she sometimes was, for it was always in the character and was the vulgarity that is seldom far from the human animal when it has only decorated its animal life and not built an ampler life upon it. All that she did on the stage was done with an indescribable energy and sparkle that restored wonderfulness to old themes which in other hands would be dull.

"For the Paris playgoer a whole range of 'femininity' goes dim at her death, as a kind of film formed between our eyes and the great scamps of Molière when Coquelin died."

I claim that these passages make good the theory of artistry in criticism. They present

the actor *to the life*, and what more can be demanded.[1] That actors wilfully ignore such life-giving criticism is the matter of my quarrel with them.

Dear, delightful people, unaccountable, irrational, splendidly right for the wrongest reasons. How they love to whittle away their own creations with some tale of dismal intention! Actors' mouths should be shut upon them that they may betray their creations nowhere save in their own brain. They are the best judges of the tricks of acting, the worst of the art in its relation to life. And this for a compelling reason to be found in their lack of a standard of reference outside the theatre.[2] They regard their art as absolute, and so it must be to them. They look upon it with the physical eye, for not otherwise could they carry out their half of the contract. But they forget that stage-illusion is a pact between actor and spectator. Just as the

[1] Ever bearing in mind the editorial principle that the reader must at all costs be entertained, I lay no stress on the instructional value of these passages. I maintain that they are more *amusing* than the meaningless list of adjectives, the perfunctory "magnificents" and "amazings."

[2] It would seem that some of our lighter actresses do not give themselves time to become acquainted with life outside the dressing-room. The following is a theatrical "star's" account of "what I did during the last two days before I set out on tour with ——.

Three visits to my theatrical dressmaker; two visits to my own dressmaker; measured for theatrical shoes; measured for private foot-gear; six hours at Messrs ——'s, my theatrical photographers; four hours at rehearsals; two visits to theatrical milliners; visit to a well-known song-writer to try over some new songs he was writing for me; an hour's practice at two new dances; signed over three hundred picture post-cards, and replied personally to thirty-four letters."

I note, however, that "the stage calls for the possession of certain qualities just in the same way as do all other professions." In gratitude for the concession I kiss the writer's "private foot-gear."

reader uses Shakespeare's page to visualise the characters for himself, so the playgoer uses the actor to corroborate some mental picture of his own. Falstaff calls not only to the Falstaff of an inner vision, but also to the spectator's whole conception of spiritual fatness. Othello sends us harking back to all noble souls wrought and perplexed. Marguerite Gautier is one of a class. The smiling rogues of Hawtrey, the clowns of Grock, are but incarnations of ourselves. From which it follows that actors are least good when they draw most attention to their cleverness and skill; best, when they leave the mind free to build up its own images. It were, however, inhuman to ask the actor to accept so stern a limitation of his art, and it is easy to understand that in his eyes he should be appraised according to what is to him palpable achievement.

An illuminative story is told of the American actor Forrest, who, being complimented on his acting of Lear, exclaimed, "Act Lear! I do not act Lear. I act Hamlet, Richard, Shylock, Virginius, if you please; but, by God! Sir, I *am* Lear!"

You can never get your great actor to believe that only the spectator is competent to say which part he plays at being and which he brings to life.[1]

[1] "With my heart literally in my mouth, and feeling the most insignificant person in the world, I went on the stage—and then, at last, I forgot that I was Miss Jones. My nervousness vanished; I was not myself any more, I was just Angela." So writes a young lady of the musical-comedy stage in a work of self-revelation. From which we are to gather that everybody in the audience was convinced that she *was* "just Angela."

We are not, then, surprised to find a great actress writing, "Seldom does the outsider, however talented as a writer and observer, recognise the actor's art, and often we are told that we are acting best when we are showing the works most plainly, and denied any special virtue when we are concealing our method." The passage is so definitely wrong-headed that it makes my point. It is not the duty of the critic to award marks for degrees in skilful concealment, to give praise to Madame Sans-Gêne for a successful assumption of vulgarity or withhold it from Beatrice on the pretext that a star danced and under that star a great and dear actress was born. The business of a critic who shall stand up to Beatrice is to give as exactly as he may an idea of the actress's definite achievement, her reading and her "business"; then to make parade of the images which rose to his mind as she strode back and forth, masterfully, clapping capacious hands together, now beguiling, now bullying, wheeling over the text like some bird on broad wing or taking the aisle of the church like some fair ship in sail. There were little value to the present day, and none at all to posterity, in an enumeration of recalls and a vague deposition as to power and pathos. The critic must give images of that power, and clues to the particular quality of pathos. He will endeavour to "hit off" Mr Nigel Playfair's round-eyed, solemn personages by some such imaginative turn as "A Parliament of Owls in Conclave," to bring back Miss Fay

Compton's Mary Rose by some such phrase as "her simplicity shone as the sun and was transfigured before us." Recently, after the exit, in a play which drew all London, of one of our strongest and least silent *raisonneurs*, an elderly gentleman turned to me and said: "Excuse me, sir, I have been out of England for twenty-seven years. Could you tell me whether that actor is Mr ——?" I assented, and he then exclaimed: "I thought so. I played cricket with him at Oxford, *and he batted just like that*." I take this to be the finest criticism of an actor ever uttered.

Players, in their memoirs, too rarely cite that which their memorialists, humbly striving, have written to the perpetuation of their fame. Rather will they recount how many times they played a part and what clothes they wore, the remarks of the dresser and the chatter of friends, the overture of fear and the finale of triumph. Of such dross they are prodigal indeed; all too niggardly of the gold which fine minds, plying pick and shovel, have wrested from the hidden places of their art.[1]

[1] Miss Ellen Terry, in a book of which the noblest thing is her appreciation of the art of Henry Irving, has the following passage:—
"In 1902 on the last provincial tour that we ever went together, Irving was ill again, but he did not give in. One night when his cough was rending him and he could hardly stand up for weakness, he acted so brilliantly and strongly that it was easy to believe in the triumph of mind over matter— in Christian science in fact! Strange to say, a newspaper man noticed the splendid power of the performance that night and wrote of it with uncommon discernment."
Observe that in spite of Miss Terry's manifest desire to do honour to the memory of a great actor, it does not occur to her to quote the passage and so restore to livelier memory that "most cunning pattern of excelling nature."

Sarah Bernhardt: A Postscript

THOSE who like myself have cherished a feeling for the actor's art akin to reverence must have rubbed their eyes on seeing a whole front page of a popular newspaper devoted to the personal affairs of little Miss Mary Pickford and a bare half-dozen lines to the announcement that Madame Sarah Bernhardt had appeared in *Athalie*: "The famous actress is in her seventy-sixth year. The rôle may be described as of the recumbent order." Shudder though one may at blithe enormity, it is useless to cavil at the editorial sense of news-values. To the whole uneducated world it really does matter what Miss Pickford eats, wears, and thinks. We were once mountebank-mad; we are now tied to the grimace. Miss Pickford is very pretty and quite a good maker of babyish faces. She brings to many "escape from their creditors and a free field for emotions they dare not indulge in real life." She gives pleasure to millions who have never heard of the great actress, or having heard that she is an old lady of seventy-six, desire not to see her.

Oh, it offends me to the very soul when old age is treated so! The hey-day of a great spirit knows no passing; there is that in this old artist which shall please our children provided they have eyes to see that which is spirit and imperishable. It were idle to pretend that the gesture is as firm, the eye as bright, the voice as liquid as once we knew them. The wonder is in the gentleness of Time which has marred

only the inessential. To him who would contribute his quota of good-will this great lady's art is still the quintessence of loveliness. Memory aiding, it is possible to "call back the lovely April of her prime," and looking out upon a later day to see "despite of wrinkles, this her golden time." But you have only to turn to the notices of her latest appearance in *Daniel* to realise the blindness of those who will not look beyond the flesh. "It is a matter for regret," writes one lusty fellow, "that this actress should be driven by circumstance to parade her infirmities before us." Follows a catalogue of departed bodily graces. "I will not bring my critical functions to bear upon the spectacle of an old lady with one leg portraying a paralytic," he concludes. I do not know that I would condemn this blind soul to any darker circle than that of its own sightlessness. The eye sees what the eye brings the means of seeing.

As the artist's physical powers have waned, so her intellectual faculties have ripened. Thirty years ago she had been content to play this foolish little Daniel with "her beauty, her grace, her flashing eye, her sinuous charm"—I quote from the catalogue of departed virtues—gathering him up to heaven at the end in her well-known cloud of fire-works. To-day Madame Bernhardt plays him, as it were, colloquially, informing unreality with a hundred little shades and accents of reality. She is fanciful, wistful, wayward, endowing little

things with an actor's interest, with something of the writer's preoccupation with style. I cannot imagine any more delightful grace-note than that of the little blue flames of the rum omelette which shall enliven her loneliness. And when she quotes her line of verse you are made conscious that this is a boy's poem. She lingers over it with the tenderness of all great artists for immaturity. What panting English tragédienne, in the full measure of bodily vigour, may compass the intimacy and interest of the Frenchwoman's lowest tone and slightest motion? In the first two acts Daniel does not appear and the stage is given over to scenes of emotion very creditably portrayed by a leading light of the Comédie Française. We applaud, for the thing seems well done; but when, in the long colloquy with Daniel, the older artist sits motionless at her table, leaving the scene in full generosity to the younger, her very silence it is which holds us, and not the tinkle of less significant speech. What other actress, when it comes to dying, can so let life out of her voice and lineaments, so cease upon the midnight? Add to the glories of such a performance something that I would call a corona of malice, a *gouaillerie*, a Puckish hint that we shall not take this for the sublime car of tragedy but for some workaday vehicle for tears. We are to feel that the rarer gifts of the actress have not been harnessed, and our minds are sent on haunting quest for the greatnesses that once she compassed. As a

younger woman she had neither the wit nor strength of mind to make this bargain with our penetration.

A year or two ago a series of performances was announced which was to be determinate and valedictory. Equally looked forward to and dreaded, they did not, as it happened, come off. In the first place the lady declared, in that vigorous way of hers, that the visit would in no way be one of farewell. She was not for epilogising; in any case the time was not yet. She was off to Honolulu, Hong-Kong, Saskatchewan, how did she know whither?—and merely desired to take temporary leave of the polite world. And then she became ill and the engagement was not fulfilled.

Well, there's no harm in this sort of good-bye. May this triumphant lady spend her long winter with her hand at her lips bidding adieu. That's one simile, and I would find another to fit her glory now departing. The shadows may be long; they will be longer yet before the dark, fingers to stir old memories, to set pulses beating at thought of a glamour that never was on earth. Is it our creeping age and recollection playing us tricks? Was it not the artist's acting but our own youth that was the miracle? I wonder!

But there is nothing which does the subject even of avowed panegyric so much harm as lack of discrimination in praise. Let me frankly admit that Sarah Bernhardt was never the

mistress of the art of reticence, and that, great show-woman that she is, she has always turned advertisement to commodity. Take the forty-year-old history of her famous tiff with the Comédie Française, ending in the rupture which was the necessary preliminary to those gallivantings over the unacted globe. The story of it all, so far as may be gleaned from the records of the time, is something as follows. The Comédie pays a visit to London, bringing in its train Mademoiselle Bernhardt, a young member whose talents have already been acclaimed by the Parisians. And here we must note that the French, in spite of an excitable temperament, are capable of a rare level-headedness in their attitude towards artists. They know how to distinguish between the personality of the actor and his talent, and are not swayed by exorbitances outside the scope of the theatre. "Je ne veux connaître de la Comédie Française en ce feuilleton," writes Sarcey, "que ce que l'on peut en voir de sa stalle d'orchestre." The English are quite other. The critic of *The Times* permits himself to write: "Further, all that we have heard of Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt, of her various talents and manifold faculties, her character and even her eccentricities, has added to the effect produced by her acting and has made her, indisputably, the centre of our curiosity and interest in the Comédie Française." No Frenchman could have written so. The effect produced by the acting of an

artist is, to him, incapable of irrelevant addition or subtraction; he is conquered by the artist and not by the woman. Our race is more phlegmatic, but it is also more naïve.

In the first pages of the *Journal of the Visit of the Comédie Française to London in 1879* Sarcey begins by deploring the coldness of the English public towards the members of the troupe other than Mademoiselle Bernhardt. He recounts for the benefit of his readers in Paris how, in spite of her altogether admirable second act in *Le Misanthrope*, Mademoiselle Croizette failed to please. How, in *Les Caprices de Marianne*, her capriciousness was ravishing but of no avail. How, in *L'Etrangère* the same actress displayed her greatest fascination yet without fascinating; how, after her fine explosion in the fourth act, the audience did, after a fashion, explode in sympathy. "Mais ce n'était pas cela. Le cœur n'y était pas." The only reason he can assign is that the English cannot worship two mistresses at the same time and that their hearts have gone out wholly to Mademoiselle Bernhardt. This is the first mention of her in the *Journal* and is followed by the phrase: "Oh! celle-là . . ." "Nothing," he continues, "can convey any idea of the infatuation she has aroused. It amounts to madness. When she is about to appear a quiver runs through the audience; she appears, and an Ah! of joy and rapture is heard on all sides. The house listens with rapt attention, bodies bent forward, glasses glued to their eyes;

they will not lose a word, and only when she has finished break into a fury of applause. Outside the theatre they speak of no one else."

It looks very much as though the English on this occasion came to the correct critical conclusion, although, it may be, for the wrong reasons. We must take into account, too, the kind of plays in which Mademoiselle Bernhardt was appearing, and contrast them with our own at the time. In 1879 the English theatre had not yet entirely emerged from the Robertsonian floods of milk-and-water. W. S. Gilbert was still posing as a sentimentalist, Byron's *Our Boys* had been produced four years earlier, the previous year had seen Wills's play of *Olivia*. Concurrently with the Comédie Française at the Gaiety there was running at the Lyceum young Mr Pinero's *Daisy's Escape*, and Mr Burnand's *Betsy* was in rehearsal. London had been melted by the pity of Miss Ellen Terry's Olivia; it was to be purged by the terror of the Frenchwoman's Phèdre. The English of that period were accustomed to see passion garbed as decently as their table legs. What, then, must they have thought of Racine and Sarah in frank exposition of incestuous love! Imagine the Englishman of du Maurier's pencil confronted by Mr Joseph Knight's account, in the respectable columns of *The Athenæum*, of this diversion:

"From the moment she entered on the stage, carefully guarded and supported by Œnone,

Mademoiselle Bernhardt realised fully the passionate, febrile, and tortured woman. Her supple frame writhed beneath the influence of mental agony and restless desire, and her postures seemed chosen with admirable art for the purpose of blending the greatest possible amount of seduction with the utmost possible parade of penitence. This is, of course, the true reading, and the whole shame of Phèdre is due to her ill success. The key-note to her character is struck in a later act, the third, wherein she says :

'Il n'est plus temps : il sait mes ardeurs insensées,
De l'austère pudeur, les bornes sont passées.
J'ai declaré ma honte aux yeux de mon vainqueur,
Et l'espoir malgré moi s'est glissé dans mon cœur.'

While, accordingly, she exhausts herself in invective against herself for her crime, she is, in fact, in the very whirlwind of her passion studying, like a second Delilah,

'His virtue or weakness which way to assail.'

Obvious as is this view, it is not always presented, the cause of absence being, perhaps, the weakness of the actress. In the present case it was fully revealed, and the picture of abject and lascivious appeal was terrible in its intensity."

Add to such a portrayal the personality which was to charm the educated men and women of half the civilised globe, and there is no wonder that the English public lost something of measure in its praise. Incense was offered up, the idol's

head was turned. I give what happened next as related by M. Georges d'Heylli :

"It is common knowledge that this great and original artist has a distaste for behaving like the rest of the world and that discipline appears to her mechanical and wearisome. One is not mistress of several arts for nothing. Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt did not content herself in England with exhibiting one aspect of her charming personality : to be an actress and nothing but an actress was not enough. She established a studio for painting and sculpture where she could be admired in the delightful costume with which the photographers have made us familiar. Yielding to the numerous requests which her great talents and the general curiosity procured for her, she consented to give performances in the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy. Now this would have been in no way the concern of either her colleagues or the Press, had it not been that the stress of this additional work told so much upon the actress as to render her physically and mentally incapable of giving her best in the theatre. The day arrived when she was unable to fulfil her part in *L'Etrangère.* The bill had to be changed and the money which had been taken for the performance returned. This was followed by recriminations between the artist and the French and English Press. Mademoiselle Bernhardt, annoyed at the general censure, resigned her membership of the Comédie Française, and

accepted, or did not accept—the rumour at least was rife—an engagement for a tour in America."

Peace was, however, restored, the artist made a *sociétaire* and granted two months' holiday in the year. She resumed her performances on 17th April 1880. Shortly afterwards a critic of standing complained that she played Doña Clorinde in Augier's *L'Aventurière* in the same manner as Virginie in *L'Assommoir*.

"La nouvelle Clorinde a eu, pendant les deux derniers actes, des emportements excessifs de toute manière, d'abord parce qu'ils forçaient sa voix qui n'a de charme que dans le *médium*, ensuite parce qu'ils l'amenaient à des mouvements de corps et de bras qu'il serait fâcheux d'emprunter à la grande Virginie de l'Assommoir pour les introduire à la Comédie Française."

Thus Auguste Vitu in the *Figaro*.

Sarah again resigned, and the great Sarcey was devilish cross about it. "Is it the fault of the Comédie," he asks, "that one of the members has perferred the rôle of star to that of artist? And then, is this so new to us Parisians? Are we not by this time used to the eccentricities of this flamboyant personage? Mademoiselle Bernhardt has resigned and is leaving us. It is unfortunate, it is true, but more particularly unfortunate for her. The Comédie loses a charming actress and must for the time being withdraw a few plays which are now hardly practicable with-

out her. But the number of these plays is small, for her art, divine instrument though it be, has not many notes. Her absence is to be regretted, but we shall get over it, and another artist will arrive, perhaps Mademoiselle Bartet, who with other qualities will turn the public's head in the same way and efface the memory of her predecessor. Actors come and actors go. After Régnier, Coquelin; after Provost, Thiron; after Samson, Got; and others will succeed to the inheritance of Got, Thiron, and Coquelin. Remember the old proverb, *Faute d'un moine l'abbaye ne chôme pas.*" Finally he delivered himself up to prophecy. "Let her make no mistake; her success will not be lasting. She is not one of those who can bear the whole brunt of a play and whose brilliance has no need of a background of mediocrity." Was ever augur more woefully mistaken? Sarcey had tried to bolster up Croizette; the world has long judged between Mademoiselle Bernhardt and Mademoiselle Bartet.

But there is another factor in this character besides wilfulness and caprice—the vacillation in artistic purpose. The Journal of the Goncourts gives a picture of her in mid-career which illustrates this. It is Edmond who writes:

10th October.

"Lunch with Sarah Bernhardt at Bauer's, who is kindly using his influence to induce her to play my *La Faustin.*

"Sarah arrives in a pearl-grey tunic braided

with gold. No diamonds except on the handle of her lorgnette. A moth-like wisp of black lace on the burning bush of her hair; beneath, the black shadow of lashes and the clear blue of her eyes. Seated at the table she complains of being little, and indeed her figure is that of the women of the Renaissance. She sits sideways on the corner of her chair, exactly like a child who has been promoted to the big table.

"At once, with gusto, she embarks upon the history of her world-scamperings. She relates how in the United States, as soon as her next tour is announced, and though it be a year beforehand, orders are sent to France for a shipload of professors in order that the young American 'miss' may know what the play is about.

"I am placed next to Sarah. She must be nearly fifty. She wears no powder and her complexion is that of a young girl. . . . She talks hygiene, morning exercises, hot baths. From this she goes on to portraits of people she has known. Dumas *fils* among others. She has a natural instinct for affability, a desire to please which is not assumed."

17th October.

"Dinner at Sarah's to read *La Faustin.*

"The little studio where she receives is not unlike a stage setting. On the floor against the walls rows of pictures, giving the apartment something of the appearance of an auction-room; over the mantelpiece her full-length portrait by

Clairin. Furniture everywhere, mediæval chests and cabinets, an infinity of articles of virtu more or less *rasta*, statuettes from Chili, musical instruments from the Antipodes. Only one sign of individual taste, the skins of great polar-bears shedding a lustre on the corner where she sits. . . .

"At dinner Sarah is very gracious and full of small attentions. We return to the studio to read the play. There is no lamp and only a few candles. The copy is typewritten and much less readable than it would have been in the usual round hand, with the result that Bauer does not read very well. The effect is cold. After the seventh scene I insist upon reading myself. I, too, do not manage very well, but I get tension into it and Sarah seems impressed by the last scene. Then tea, during which there is no further talk of the play. Finally Sarah comes over to me, says that the piece is full of passion, that the last act seems superb, and asks me to leave the script that she may go through one or two scenes which have been omitted. A few vague sentences which may mean that Sarah will accept the play, and even a phrase as to putting me into touch with her manager, but nothing decisive.

"Now there are some things which are not favourable. Sarah is a romantic. At the moment the fuss they are making of Réjane inclines her towards the modern, but her artistic temperament is against it. Further, in my play

Sarah has a wretch of a sister, and it so happens that she actually possesses one—a fact of which, until recently, I was ignorant."

26th November.

"In reply to my letter asking for the return of my play I have to-day received a telegram from Sarah affirming a wish to act in something of mine, and asking for a further six weeks in which to think *La Faustin* over quietly. My belief is that although she may wish to give the piece she will not do so."

22nd February.

"To-day, without a word, the manuscript is returned."

Once free of the Comédie, Sarah envisages her famous world-tours, and embarks upon gallivantings innumerable. And once definitely on the rampage candour compels me to admit, as it compelled Joe Gargery, that she was indeed a Buster. So began the long period of trumpeting vagabondage, and with it the history of "Sardoodledum." The actress tore about the habitable globe piling whirlwind upon earthquake and littering the stages of half-a-dozen countries with the pasteboard wreckage of Fédoras, Théodoras, Toscas, Sorcières. There was probably not more than one English critic who kept his head in all this welter of popes, princes, cardinals, Russian Grand Dukes, Austrian Archdukes, German counts, cantatrices, In-

quisitors, gaolers, nihilists, poisoners and assassins. Amid the general delirium Mr Shaw alone was heard to declare himself unimpressed by the sight of an actress "chopping a man to death with a hatchet as a preliminary to appearing as a mediæval saint with a palm in her hand at the head of a religious procession." "Her charm," he declared, "could be imitated by a barmaid with unlimited pin-money and a row of footlights before her instead of the handles of a beer-machine." Her voice he likened to the *voix céleste* stop, "which, like a sentimental New England villager with an American organ, she keeps always pulled out."

But this was not criticism's general temper. Even Mr Shaw admitted that when the actress was engaged "not in stabbing people with hatpins, but in the normal straightforward business of acting she could do it completely enough." Then came the great day of Wednesday, 9th December 1896. A grand fête was organised by a Mr Henry Bauer, "to mark the apogee of Mademoiselle Bernhardt's artistic career." This gentleman invited Sarah to sit herself down for an hour or two and, recalling her early struggles and her present triumphs, let the readers of the *Figaro* into her soul-state on the occasion of a ceremony which was to be in every way remarkable. Nothing daunted, the great artist replied: "Mais c'est un examen de conscience que vous me demandez, cher ami," and with characteristic aplomb continued: "Et cependant, je n'hésite

pas une seconde à vous répondre." The affair was a combination of luncheon and theatrical performance; sonnets specially composed were read by François Coppée, Edmond Haraucourt, André Theuriet, Catulle Mendès and one, inaudibly, by Heredia. And then the great Rostand gave tongue:

"En ce temps sans beauté, seule encor tu nous restes
Sachant descendre, pâle, un grand escalier clair,
Ceindre un bandeau, porter un lys, brandir un fer.
Reine de l'attitude et Princesse des gestes.

En ce temps, sans folie, ardente, tu protestes!
Tu dis des vers. Tu meurs d'amour. Ton vol se perd.
Tu tends des bras de rêve, et puis des bras de chair.
Et quand Phèdre paraît, nous sommes tous incestes.

Avide de souffrir, tu t'ajoutas des cœurs;
Nous avons vu couler — car ils coulent tes pleurs!—
Toutes les larmes de nos âmes sur tes joues.

Mais aussi tu sais bien, Sarah, que quelquefois
Tu sens furtivement se poser, quand tu joues,
Les lèvres de Shakespeare aux bagues de tes doigts."

Our own Wilson Barrett sent a silver crown with the names of her rôles on the leaves, and Sarah was duly overcome.

But then Sarah could always be overcome at will. It is said that when, many years later, she rehearsed the English of her reply to the address to be publicly presented to her by Sir Herbert Tree, she paused in the middle and said: "Here I shall cry a little." And, on the day, in that place she did cry a little.

There is a strange account of the actress by the Roumanian, de Max, which the curious will not desire that I should omit:

"Il y a deux Sarah—au moins. Il y a celle qu'on voit de la salle. Et il y a celle qu'on voit des coulisses. Le malheur est que, des coulisses, on voit quelquefois la même que dans la salle, la plus belle. C'est un malheur, parce que ces jours-là, on n'est plus maître de soi; on arrive avec de la haine, de la fureur. On veut se venger d'elle, et puis on devient spectateur en jouant; quand le rideau se ferme, on lui baise les mains, avec des larmes. . . . Acteur, je connus l'actrice Sarah. Je commus aussi à son Théâtre une petite fille, qui s'appelait, par hasard, Sarah. Ai-je détesté, ai-je aimé cette insupportable petite fille? Je ne sais plus. C'est si loin. J'ai vieilli. Pas elle. C'est toujours une petite fille, une insupportable petite fille, qui a des caprices, des cris, des crises. Ah! les crises de cette petite fille!"

And yet this *petite fille* is the artist from whom "speech fell, even as her dress, in great straight folds, fringed with gold." It is the artist with the soul of Clairon's "I am eighty-five; my heart is twenty-five."

It is now a good many years since Madame Sarah, as she likes to be called by people who have a real affection for her, came to lunch at my mother's house at Manchester. My mother managed, throughout her long life, to superimpose upon an outlook not unlike Jane Austen's a great sympathy with all artists. This may have been through her descent from Edward Shuter, the comedian, of whom Doran says that his life was one round of intense professional labour, jollification, thoughtlessness, embarrassment, gay philosophy and addiction to religion as expounded by Whitfield. My mother's grace and wit were, however, entirely her own. She accepted Madame Sarah's proposal that she should come to lunch graciously and without commotion of spirit. There was some discussion, I remember, as to what ceremonies were to be observed, and what eaten and drunk. We tried to imagine what Charles Lamb would have set before Mrs Siddons. Could we rely upon our guest "counting fish as nothing"? Our old nurse it was who clinched the matter. "I suppose the poor body eats like everyone else," she said, "her stomach will be none the worse for a good warming." There was some question as to who

should hand the great lady out of her carriage and help her up the steep slope of the path. It was decided that the gardener, who for many years had performed this office for my mother, should not now be denied. If there had ever been sincerity in Adrienne's passages with the old servitor, she would, we felt, understand. You see we were not unmindful of the fiasco of the seaport Mayor. The story goes that many years ago the great actress was to descend upon a town which boasts of a fine council-chamber, situated at the top of a flight of forty-six steps. Here, when the time came, were to be ensconced the Mayor in his robes, the town clerk, the beadle and other dignitaries. It was up these steps that the great actress was to toil. The train draws in, a state carriage with postillions and outriders is at hand. A huge crowd. A delighted Sarah sets forth, only to catch sight, after a few yards, of the stairway at top of which, perched in his eyrie, Bumble-surrounded, awaits her the Mayor. "Ah, mais non! mais non!" she cries. "J'ai assez grimpé dans ma vie! A l'hôtel."

Well, Madame Sarah came, and she came in state. She wore a wonderful mantle of misty grey like the breasts of sea-birds. It was in the first chill of autumn, and I like to think that the bowed trees of the garden bent still lower to touch with the tips of their branches the radiance as it passed. It was a moment or two before the presentations were over; she had brought her granddaughter and a woman friend. And then

lunch, of which we could persuade our guest to touch only a quarter of a wing of chicken and some toast fingers dipped in milk. Horribly I found myself thinking of Tilburina and her confidante. But almost at once, to put us at our ease, she began to talk. The smallest of small talk, conventional inquiries as to what we did, a declaration that if my brothers became great men or my sister a great actress, we should not, the whole lot of us, amount to the value of our mother's little finger. About the theatre she would say very little and it was a subject we naturally avoided. I had a feeling that one of us might suddenly, out of sheer nervousness, ask her to recite.

And then, after a time, Sarah fell to talking about actors and acting, and this I take to be the finest politeness I have experienced. First she had some handsome things to say of English players. Of Henry Irving, whom she called a great artist and a bad actor. She admired his temperament, but his oddities, his uncouthness, his queerness of technique perplexed her, and I should certainly not have trusted her to appreciate Benson. Of Forbes-Robertson, whose Hamlet she considered a jewel to be worn on the finger of the poet himself. She talked affectionately of Coquelin, "ce bon Coquelin," and admiringly of Réjane. A very great comedian she called her, but rather resented my suggestion that she had great tragic gifts. "Non," she replied, "elle a la voix canaille."

And then the conversation turned upon her interpretation of a part which she was then playing. This was Lucrecia Borgia, of whom I thought then, and still think, her conception wrong. Her idea of Lucrecia—and in this it must be admitted that she followed Hugo's lead—was of a perfectly good woman with a poisonous kink. She held that even if Lucrecia did entertain a passion for murder she would not show her vice except when viciously engaged. One remembered Charles Peace fiddling between thefts, but without succeeding in thinking this an apt reinforcement for her. One thought, too, of the provincial lady who was accustomed to give a lecture to schoolgirls on the occasion of the annual Shakespearean revisal. Confronted with *Antony and Cleopatra* the lecturer evaded the difficulties of her subject by announcing that she proposed to confine her considerations of the heroine's character to her aspect as a mother. This, again, did not seem a very suitable remark, and frankly, we did not shine.

Actors are always difficult to talk to. They will not realise that all that matters is the impression the spectator actually receives and that he is not influenced by what the actor thinks or hopes he is conveying. If only actors knew how much of the interpreting is done by the spectator and how little by themselves! We experienced, of course, extreme difficulty in putting it to Sarah that what she thought about Lucrecia was of no importance, that it was only what she made us

think that mattered. In fact we could not put it at all. We could only say that she turned Lucrecia into a good-natured goose with unaccountable moments. However, she came to the rescue with a happy "Eh bien, je vois que ça ne vous plaît pas. Qu'est-ce qui vous plaît donc?" And we tried to get her to talk about her Pelléas, which is the one perfect thing that not Mademoiselle Mars, not Mademoiselle Clairon, not ten thousand Rachels could ever have accomplished. She had singularly little to say about this, but we put it down to our not having proved ourselves worthy to be talked to. The thing we would most have instilled into our guest was that our admiration was critical. Youthfully we had long settled the order of her parts. First Pelléas, the butt and sea-mark of her utmost sail, then the world-wearied Phèdre; next the Jeanne d'Arc of inviolate ecstasy, and last the Marguerite, patchouli'd, but still incredibly lovely. We wanted her to realise something of this. Well, we failed.

We would have read to her the whole of that passage on art and the artist which I have given in an earlier part of this book. "There!" we would have said. "That's what we think of the actor's art, and of the heights to which only the very few are capable of rising. It's just because art is as fine as all this that you can be so fine." I think we would have lectured her in our young enthusiasm, but for the impossibility of throwing off so tremendous a creed at a moment's notice.

"Mais, qu'est-ce qu'ils me chantent, ces enfants?" she would have exclaimed.

She declared that she never read dramatic criticism: "Les critiques ne savent rien." It was then that I wanted to do something violent, to induce in that august head some perception of the discernment of which she had been the object. But she was, I thought, a little like some intolerant goddess bored by her worshippers and disinclined for nice distinctions.

I tried to get her to understand something of the overthrow of my small soul when first I saw her act. It was on an evening in July in the early nineties. From my place in the queue I could see a long poster in mauve and gold, spangled with silver stars. The ineffability was that of Marguerite Gautier. It was not for some years that I was to hear how such a commonplace sentence as "On nous abandonne, et les longues soirées succèdent aux longs jours," could be set to such music that it should vibrate in the memory for ever. I had yet to hear these phrases dropped like stones into some golden well of felicity. The play that evening was *La Tosca*. The wait was long. At the hour of her coming my heart began to beat. I remember as though it were yesterday the opening of the door, the dark, silent theatre, the second long wait, the turning up of the lights, the going up of the curtain, the exquisite tenderness of the opening scene. I remember the setting of the candles round the body of Scarpia, and that is all. I next

saw the actress in *Fédora*, and shortly afterwards in *Frou-frou* and *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. *La Dame aux Camélias* followed about 1898. All these were in Manchester; and then came the time when I went to Paris frequently and saw her often. There was always great difficulty in getting a glimpse of her Phèdre. The actress seemed wilfully to prefer rubbish, and both Phèdre and Pelléas were difficult birds to bring down. When, finally, one saw it there was the further difficulty of finding any French critic up to writing adequately about it. Once more I turn up my little hand-book and read again what the late W. T. Arnold wrote forty years ago:

"Could anything have been more deliciously poetical than that kindling eager eye, the hand slowly stretched out, and the finger pointing into space, as Phèdre sees before her half in a dream the chariot 'fuyant dans la carrière'? The great Phèdre has hitherto been that of Rachel. It is useless to dilate upon Rachel's tragic power. Her performance alike in the second and in the fourth acts is declared by all competent critics to have been all but perfection. The doubtful question is rather whether she was capable of rendering the tenderness and the infinite piteousness of the hapless woman as she rendered her transports of passion. We can conceive Rachel as having been better than Madame Bernhardt in the denunciation of Œnone, and, indeed, M. Sarcey, in his notice of the performance of

Phèdre by the Comédie Française intimates that she was so; but we should like to know how Rachel said such passages as this:

'Œnone, il peut quitter cet orgueil qui te blesse;
Nourri dans les forêts, il en a la rudesse.
Hippolyte, endurci par de sauvages lois,
Entend parler d'amour pour la première fois:
Peut-être sa surprise a causé son silence;
Et nos plaintes peut-être ont trop de violence.'

The inexpressible tenderness with which those lines were sighed rather than spoken was all Madame Bernhardt's own. This line again:

'Et l'espoir malgré moi s'est glissé dans mon cœur.'

And this, when she has discovered the love of Hippolyte and Aricie, and contrasts their affection with her own guilty passion:

'Tous les jours se levoient clairs et sereins pour eux.'

These were the passages Madame Bernhardt marked with the most personal and enduring charm, and in these we cannot believe that she has not surpassed her forerunners."

And then came the time, about 1908, when I was first privileged to write about her. I have written elsewhere all that I ever intend to write. What more is there to be said of that quick and frenzied diction, that foam and spate of speech

alternating with pools of liquid bliss? What more of those plumbed depths of abasement, those scaled yet unimaginable heights of remorse, that fury of immolation tearing its own flanks as the tiger "rends with those so awful paws the velvet of the breeding hind"? Where earlier actresses have been content with a molten and brassy horror, Bernhardt's passion has taken on the fragrance of bruised violets. None other could suffer as she did. Rachel may have exceeded her in terror; she cannot have surpassed her in inviolacy and immaculacy, in rapt and mystical purity. Bernhardt did not use to die so much as to swoon upon death. "Combien sont morts qui, moins heureux que vous, n'ont pas même donné un seul baiser à leur chimère!" Her beloved Rostand asks the same question:

"Combien,
Moins heureux, épuisés d'une poursuite vaine,
Meurent sans avoir vu leur Princesse lointaine."

And Mélissinde replies:

"Combien, aussi, l'ont trop tôt vue, et trop longtemps,
Et ne meurent qu'après les jours désenchantants!"

Yet none of this is true of Bernhardt. She has embraced the glory and the dream. She has measured herself with destiny and touched the lips of her desire. Her acting is now an affair of the spirit, the victory of the incorruptible. For victory it is, victory over the fraying

scabbard, victory in the dauntless survival of the soul of steel, the will to persist, *quand même.* One picture springs to the mind. It is the transfiguration of Lear:

"I will do such things—
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth."

Substitute for terrors, wonders; then picture this valiant woman still wresting a last late secret from her art. Can we not see the trust put in us here to read by the spirit those ardours, perils, and adventures which may no longer be expressed save by the spirit? Yet be sure of this, that as no quarter is asked so none will be given. If this acting of to-day mislikes you, you must be prepared to say that at the player's hey-day you had also been displeased; for of genius it is the spirit and not the body which matters. Of this artist all that is left is spirit. She has bent her will to battle with doom and death. She has, to echo Charlotte Brontë, fought every inch of ground, sold every drop of blood, resisted to the latest the rape of every faculty, has *willed* to see, has *willed* to hear, has *willed* to breathe, has *willed* to live up to, within, and even beyond the moment when death to any less fiery spirit had said: "Thus far and no farther!"

Can it not be realised that it was something of all this that we wanted, and failed so lamentably, to say? We wanted to tell her that we *knew.* Did she know, I wonder? As she drove away

she said something to my mother which we did not hear. The carriage receded and she waved her flowers. There was a look of grave amusement in her eyes, something of the memory and the kinship of youth.

Big Pugs and Little

The high and heroic state of man.
HAZLITT.

THE refusal of a leading promoter of boxing shows to magnoperate on behalf of principals who fail to carry out their contracts is a shrewder blow than these gentlemen are accustomed to receive even from one of their own kidney. It may mean the end of boxing as a fashionable entertainment, and should bring to their senses gladiators accustomed to receive for half-an-hour's play of thew and sinew the reward of a Prime Minister's brains. But not all boxers are simple virtuosos in brawn. Carpentier is one of the exquisite figures of our time; no handsomer or more intelligent actor graces those other boards. There is in his manner towards an opponent something of Hamlet's "What's his weapon?" What weapon indeed has British stolidity to counter Gallic wits? Bull-dog courage? Alas, in this mimic warfare as in the real, it is not elemental virtue which prevails. Ask the British champion, Mr Joseph Beckett. I have a deal of respect for Mr Joe—he should have been surnamed Oak-tree. He is own brother to that Michael of whom it has been written that though he will not bend he breaks with comparative ease. No Adonis resting neat-gloved hands upon the ropes and treading the powdered resin into his shoes can make Joe bend. There is purpose here. Bull-dog that he is, he will not let go, though he bite nothing better than the dust. We

English have not been without our figure of admiration, but the very thought of combat has made our Crichton cry out with Troilus: "I am giddy; expectation whirls me round." And thus to offer an easy mark to a more stable foe.

Of all the prize-fights—for let us be honest and call things by their proper names—of recent years, the one that has excited me most was that between the Bombardier and Joe. Other fights I remember vividly enough though not with the same passion. There was Welsh's cold and scientific defeat of Ritchie, and Carpentier's lucky win over Gunboat Smith. Both events took place at Olympia shortly before the war, and drew their quota of fashionable ladies and elegant trollops, gold-toothed niggers, fops, clergymen, shop-assistants, artists. At this "venue"—as the newspapers call it when the prices are high enough—was the "clash" between Jimmy Wilde and Pal Moore, the fighting a foregone conclusion to that ardent supporter and Celtic soul who brought from his native coal-fields an enormous dragon-embroidered flag with which to cover victor and vanquished in one hurly-burly of confusion and glory. Jimmy is no longer the wistful figure of frailty he once was. I have an early photograph in which he wears his yonderly expression, that air of "not being strong." His features at the time had well adorned the fly-leaf of a story by George Macdonald. There was the remote, faint atmosphere of the Sunday school about him; he

was a Donal Grant, an Alec Forbes, a youthful Marquis of Lossie. To judge by the colour of his hands, the little fellow might have posed after a day's work in the mine. Or say that he had been put up in his buff to fight a bully—the sport of some Saturday afternoon. Forked radish were too much a symbol of mass to denote his physique of those days. To-day Mr Wilde takes his oysters and his champagne like a man. He fills his clothes and so shrinks to life-size. He has ceased to be the wonder and the marvel of the age; he is no longer miraculous. He ranks with the world's workaday talents, with Hambourg, Hobbs, and Lasker, rather than with Chaplin, Nijinsky, Donoghue. He has become reckonable; he does the things grown men may do and not those which it were unthinkable a child should attempt. Other great events of the ring have I seen—Jim Driscoll's "tragedy"; Basham's woeful attempt to stand up against "Kid" Lewis; that hero's eighteen seconds' dismissal of "Frankie" Moody; the unreflective pitting of rival beeves which was the fight between Goddard and Moran; Beckett's long-drawn agonies with M'Goorty and McCormick; encounters Blackfriars way, where, in the ring, the blood is up indeed and, on the surrounding benches, admiration struggles with cupidity in the sharp-set, cunning faces of the "butchers from Tothill Fields, brokers from Whitechapel."

Yet not one of these matches had the same quality of apprehension as the Wells-Beckett

affair. The issue was never in doubt and yet seemed dreadfully to matter. It were a sane thing to suggest that the issue of the battle of Jutland was fraught with graver consequences than this clash of pugs. May the Bombardier forgive me; but he is that, in spite of his auburn, close-curled hair, his courtesy and charm. Phœbus Apollo turned Promethean pug. Yet will I swear that our breaths came more quickly during those few short rounds than with the scene set for the overthrow of a great navy. It is not to be supposed that the hearts of boxers beat as fast as those of their idolaters. Wells gives you the impression that his heart has long ceased to beat. He is fey, he cannot win; he will stave off defeat, gallantly, for an all too small number of rounds. He is "an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing."

And that is why he is foredoomed. He has everything that a gentleman should have and nothing that a prize-fighter must own.[1] He makes pretence to defy augury; yet he knows that if defeat be not now, it will come at the end. What is it then to lose betimes? Not much to him, perhaps, but to his friends an abiding sorrow. About Mr Joe there is no air

[1] In his book Carpentier wrote: "Wells is without what I call personality—a fighting personality." He goes on to explain that to worry and jolly an opponent, to get on his mind as an obsession *in the days of preparation before a match*, is part of the "psychology" of the game. But then Georges had been staying in America.

of mystery. He glowers in his corner, and peering through little screwed-up eyes, would seem to glimpse a big thing in front of him, to see it and bend up every corporal agent to do it. For the rest he is a plain, blunt man, slow to give or take offence.

One of the most deeply rooted things in the English character is the love of sailors and of prize-fighters. "Almost everybody in our land, except humanitarians and a few persons whose youth has been depressed by exceptional æsthetic surroundings, can understand and sympathise with an admiral or a prize-fighter. I do not wish to bracket Benbow and Tom Cribb; but, depend upon it, they are practically bracketed for admiration in the minds of many frequenters of ale-houses. If you told them about Germanicus and the eagles, or Regulus going back to Carthage, they would very likely fall asleep, but tell them about Harry Pearce and Jem Belcher, or about Nelson and the Nile, and they put down their pipes to listen." So Stevenson.

And thus it came about that on the night of combat all roads led to Olympia. The previous day had been Sunday, and Sunday's peace had been routed by the din of the impending conflict. You could not pick up a news-sheet without having it forced upon you that Mr Wells was "quietly confident," and that Mr Beckett was in the habit of saying nothing but grimly shooting out his lips. The men themselves do not advertise. But the newspapers have their self-

respect, bless you, and see to it that heroes lose nothing by a Quakerish reserve. They make wonderful play with the "human interest," do our papers, with Mr Beckett's stolidity and Mr Wells's nerves.

> "As fiddlers they are bad, but then,
> Consider what they are as men."

As champions, judged by the old standard, both our heroes are poor, and Mace and Belcher must be tired of turning in their graves at the comparisons which have been made. "Understanding and sympathy" indeed it must be which drags a mayor from his council-chamber to set a champion on his way, and places at the disposal of a pair of maulers the nation's telegraphs, telephones, and police. People there were who grumbled, but in this country we take no notice of the curmudgeon. An the authorities seek sanction for their exuberance they will find it in Sir William Temple's "Whether it be wise in men to do such actions or no, I am sure it is so in States to honour them." To my mind no sanction is needed beyond the people's pleasure. Arrangements were made to flash the news of the result all over England,

"Till Belvoir's lordly terraces the sign to Lincoln sent,
And Lincoln sped the message on o'er the wide Vale of Trent,

Till Skiddaw saw the fire that burned on Gaunt's
embattled pile,
And the red glare on Skiddaw roused the
burghers of . . . Southampton."

But on Solent's shore that fateful night there was no question of "retiring" until the screen had spoken. On this momentous night no lad throughout the length and breadth of the land went ignorant to bed; in the London clubs, at two in the morning, peers of the realm fought the battle over again, whereby certain noble benches remained untenanted for days. In the morning every old gentleman whose heart was still sound turned first in his paper to the news that mattered; duchesses and dowagers rang for their gossip betimes. All hearts were with Wells. "I have taken the depth of the water," said Admiral Duncan, "and when the *Venerable* goes down my flag will still fly." The Bombardier knew that he must go down; but he had taken the depth of public esteem and knew also that his flag would still be flying.

Wells is no coward; he is not nervous in the sense that he fears defeat. It is the thought of victory which unmans him. He is like the cricketer fainting on the verge of a century, who faced the first ball without a tremor. History does not lack instances; so Hackenschmidt when he beat Madrali. A journalist of the period tells us that as the wrestlers were due to leave their dressing-rooms the news went round that the

great Russian had an attack of nerves. His stomach was wrong! They were anointing him with alcohol! He was faint! He was trembling! And yet you would have sworn the huge fellow's nerves to be those of an ox. "It may be that coarse metals are less flexible than finer; certain it is that they do not well cohere." It may be that this is true in mineralogy—philologists will know whether I mean metallurgy—it is not true in men. Wells was the finer metal of the two, finer in the sense of being the more sensitive, but it was Beckett who cohered and Wells who, in sporting parlance, came unstuck. But then he had gone to pieces before the fight began. "It's St Paul's agin the blinkin' Monument," said a tough, "and the blinkin' Monument'll crack." It is said that the champion, shooting out his lips, pushed aside one of his seconds who was framing to ascend the steps before him. I did not notice this. What I did observe was a self-hypnotised Wells rooted to earth at the ring-side, his seconds patting the ladder to encourage him to mount. He was *morally* defenceless; it was as though his opponent held a sword of fire in his hand against an unarmed body.

And yet he did pretty well; he returned blow for blow, stalled off ruin, raised hopes, was battered to his knees. "There was little cautious sparring—no half hits—no tapping and trifling, none of the *petit-maîtreship* of the art—they were almost all knock-down blows; the

fight was a good stand-up fight. To see two men smashed to the ground, smeared with gore, stunned, senseless, the breath beaten out of their bodies; and then, before you could recover from the shock, to see them rise up with new strength and courage, stand steady to inflict or receive mortal offence and rush upon each other 'like two clouds over the Caspian'—this is the most astonishing thing of all: this is the high and heroic state of man!"

What is the secret of the hold Wells has over the British public? Why do we lean so tenderly to this reed shaken by the wind of every fighter's fist? Why, when the boards "received his hams and body," as a Georgian poet has it, did they receive one who was still a national hero? Perhaps it is because his is the head upon which "all the ends of the world are come." Perhaps, mischievously, because the beauty of Wells is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries. Set it for a moment beside one of those tall goddesses and beautiful heroines of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed. Like the vampire he has been outed many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about him; and trafficked for strange belts with fighting Frenchmen; and all this has been to him but as the sound of lyres and flutes. . . .

They wrapped Wells up in that dolorous dressing-gown which it is his wont to doff so hopefully when the lights go up, and to don so hopelessly when his light is out. But virtue and comfort remain in its folds; it will ever be cheered in the four corners of the land; and he will still be a bold fighter in whose honour the seconds take it in their charge. "It hurts," said Wells's chief supporter after the fight. "It hurts, but there can't be two winners." This is the philosophy proper to the occasion. So Peter Jackson, negro and gentleman, after he had knocked out Slavin.

JACKSON: Good-night, Paddy. There can't be two winners, but good luck to you.
SLAVIN: Good-night, Peter.

But it is the smaller fry towards whom my heart more particularly leans. It is meat and drink to me to see a second-rater. One gets tired of the big men, of their preening and peacocking, of their portentousness. I mislike the air of coming down to the arena horsed by captive kings. There is too much solemnity at Olympia, and the crowd is too well behaved. In the smaller booths the little chaps dive in and out of the ring like fishes, without ceremony at the start, without too great a degree of elation or discomforture at the finish. It would seem sometimes as though getting down to weight were with them not a part of training but an economic shift. They can be desperately thin.

They are of all trades—blacksmiths, porters, fishmongers, newsboys—but common to them all are the badges of the heroic profession—the matted hair plastered low on the narrow forehead, the ringed and shaven neck, the felicitous devices of the tattooist. Stunted though they may be in intelligence, these budding bruisers can never be as inept as the polite young gentlemen who posture in revue. I cannot imagine a more honourable career than to knock-out and be knocked-out; I cannot conceive a less noble one than to loll life away on plush divans in company with eleven other scented and manicured little masters. I am conscious of some unfairness here. What alternative is there for the beauty-chorister? Selling gloves over a counter, making up posies at the florist's, barbering—all these demand a higher education. Clerking calls for greater intelligence, and portering for greater industry. We should, perhaps, be prepared to forgive these little manikins that they jig, amble and lisp; they might starve else. But their principals! Consider the highly-paid hero of musical comedy who sings a ditty in lawn-tennis flannels and yachting cap, and a different ditty—the composer tells us it is a different ditty—in dress-clothes and an opera-hat. Strip him of flannels and dress-clothes and, bless me, how little remarkable he would look! Strip your boxer, and he rises to the pristine dignity of man. Clothe him, and he falls from his high estate. The queasy cap, the muffler, the coat with three buttons crowded

together in the pit of the stomach, the tight trousers, the boots of soft uppers and snubbed toecaps—what uniform of degradation is this!

Boxers are those who, clothed, are in their wrong mind. Strippen out of rude array, they are men who realise that complete ferocity may go hand in hand with perfect amity. I remember being present at a small provincial show at which a lad was disqualified for biting. There was the usual uproar; the livery of shame was declared thenceforth the offender's only wear; there was talk of taking away his living. After the fight I took occasion to touch delicately, gingerly even, upon the subject of his trespass. The lad assured me with many fervent protestations that he had been totally unconscious of the action. He, if I may so express it, "sw'elp-me'd," into conviction of his moral innocence. "Besides," said he, "lor' lumme, *I were winnin' any'ow!* Got 'im set, I 'ad. Easy! There'd 'av bin no sense in bitin', an' that. I must 'a wanted to knock the grin off 'is ugly dial, see? Sw'elp me, that's stright! That's 'ow I looks at it, see? Wivout finkin'." And surely, wilful biting under extreme excitement is more the act of a sportsman than the cold-blooded consent to rig a fight. Perhaps these small shows are least admirable in their best-paid bouts, and it may be that any but the strongest of referees would be chary of disqualifying a dirty fighter with a popular following. I once saw a French boxer, proffering a helping hand to one of our

own brutes half-toppled through and tangled-up in the ropes, rewarded with a vicious blow in the mouth. But the Frenchman was equal to the occasion. "Si c'est comme ça!" he said, with a shrug, and resigned the fight. The referee at these contests must needs be a man of courage; a ginger-beer bottle hurled from the gallery is a formidable missile. A man of courage he is, then, an Olympian with a thunderbolt in each hand. And when a dazed and beaten man hangs helpless on the ropes, and in the din no voice can make itself heard; when, in this extremity, he bids Time advance a full minute and strike upon the bell, then is it with the thronged circle of spectators as though another Joshua had arisen to order the sun to heel.

Swan and Dragon-Fly

THE critic is bound from time to time to declare some standard to which his judgments are referable. This in pure unselfishness, that he may bring into play the reader's own power of deduction and interpretation; in expediency, that, when the curtain falls too late for him to go to the root of the matter, he may be taken on trust. The critic who always insists on a preliminary of first principles may be a nuisance, but he should not be above boring his readers now and again, especially when it is for his good as well as theirs. When, recently, Madame Pavlova reappeared in London after an absence of six years, our critics asked to be taken on trust to a man. They assured us that there were many dancers but only one Pavlova, that she was still the adorable and adored Pavlova, that no good purpose could by any possibility be served by a detailed analysis of so much pure and unadulterated joy as Pavlova commanded. The grounds of this artist's peculiar adorableness were not stated, nor was there any word as to the manner in which the pure joy evoked by her resembled or differed from the unadulterated delight imparted by Karsavina, the incomparable ecstasy of Lopokova, the rapture of Tchernicheva. Now it may be that criticism by people who know all there is to be known about the art of dancing, does not need to be reasoned, and may be taken largely on trust. I, who know nothing about that art, prefer to try my hand at finding in first

principles common to all arts a reasonable key to my unreasonable admiration of Pavlova. Here let me confess to an inability to regard the old-fashioned ballet, pitchforked into the middle of an opera, as anything but a pure and simple irrelevance, or distraction for elderly satyrs. This may be nonsense, but it was also Balzac's view. In this school not dancing, but the dancer, is exploited. Its technique interests me just about as much and in exactly the same way as the technique of the *haute école* of the circus-master. A *première danseuse* taking three hundred steps to cross the stage, thereafter with the fixed smile of the marionette to stand interminably a-tiptoe, provokes in me the same quality of amazement as when a horse curtsies or, erect on its haunches, paws at vacancy. In neither case are the emotions aroused, whereas the function of the dancer, as distinct from the acrobat, is to arouse them very definitely.

"It is a mistake to regard poetry, music, and painting"—one mentally adds dancing—"as but translations into different languages of one and the same fixed quantity of imaginative thought, supplemented by certain technical qualities of colour in painting, of sound in music, of rhymical words in poetry. . . . Each art brings with it a special phase or quality of beauty, untranslatable into the forms of any other, an order of impressions distinct in kind." So Pater, voicing the incontrovertible principle underlying all criticism. The arts are so many passports to beauty, as strictly

non-transferable as the return halves of railway tickets. The moment you ask of a picture, a symphony or a dance: "What does it mean?" you are asking for an expression in words, in terms of literature, of what the artist by his choice of medium has already declared to be inexpressible save in the terms of painting, music, and dancing. A painter would sooner explain a picture to you by painting something else; a musician one sonata by playing you another. The finding of tongues in painted trees, books in painted brooks, and sermons in the stones of Venice is simple wrong-headedness. The writer must not hope to convey in printed symbols the exact emotion created by the dancer when, as the Swan, she sinks flutteringly to rest, or, as the Gipsy, lays her despair upon the ground, letting sorrow ebb in the ripple of her arms.

The greatest dancing, first principles tell us, must be that of the *première danseuse*, that art so formal and self-contained, as little heedful of any aim, other than the expression of itself, as a page of Henry James or the Japanese decoration of a fan. There may be a world behind these things, but it is a faint, unreal world, and our immediate delight is in the thing itself, an exquisite baffling thing filling us with the sense of not being able to catch up. Whereas the great dancers throw such an art boldly over; their dances are to interpret, to *mean*, in the fatal sense, in the same way that Strauss declared *Also Sprach Zarathustra* to mean the development

of the human race up to Nietzsche and the Uebermensch. Here we come upon a paradox. The greatest dancing refuses adherence to first principles, declines to remain absolute, and positively insists upon humbling itself to the position of interpreter, the decently-garbed attendant showing you through the habitation of some more magnificent muse. The greatest dancers are not content to remain dancers; they will be actors as well. Perhaps it is that they are not the greatest dancers of all, that their absence of detachment and the complication of human interest removes them from the higher and colder sphere. Certain it is that Pavlova moves you in a purely human way, sending the mind working after images and symbols with which to express their human emotion. You find yourself thinking in terms of scudding clouds and orchard-surf, the beat of waves, a string of birds against the moon, the wing-laden shimmer of the dusk. "She had upon her skin the good odours of withered violets, her loins bent as palm-trees, her hands were as running waters of desire." Other pictures crowd upon you, beauty seized at the supreme moment of expression and held for ever, arrested figures on a Grecian vase, pictures of Botticelli. Such dancing has "phrasing," as the musicians put it, and one is amazed at its purely decorative quality, the power of filling a space, a circle, as Burne-Jones could do. Sometimes the sheer beauty of "natural" grace catches you by the throat. There is a melody of

line, if you like, but the heard melodies of the orchestra are reduced to a subordinate tinkle, so well does this beautiful art pipe to you ditties of no tone save its own soundless one of perfect motion. Dancing may concern itself with immortal beauty or a game of skittles in a bar parlour—Pavlova at her best sends us back to Aphrodite. "I was free, I was pure. The seas shook for love of me at the touch of my heels. I was beauty! I was shapeliness! I trembled over the world asleep; substance was dried up at the sight of mine eyes, *of itself it strengthened into just shapes.*"

Something of this we would have said of the Pavlova of old, a Pavlova which, alas! the recent visit did not show us. This artist needs a dramatist to stand up to, not a ballet-master. She has been acclaimed as the equal of the great tragic players, and mere prettiness, however exquisite and enchanting, will not suffice. Imitations of swans and dragon-flies, however haunting, can never be more than *divertissements.* From the play-bill I had imagined that she was to appear in *Thaïs*, and I read wonders into what the performance was to be. It was to give me all over again the Moreau-Huysmans painting: "Diamonds sparkle on the dead whiteness of her skin, her bracelets, girdles, rings, shoot sparks; on her triumphal robe, sewn with pearls, flowered with silver, sheeted with gold, the jewelled breast-plate, whose every stitch is a precious stone, bursts into flame, scatters in

snakes of fire, swarms on the ivory-toned, tea-rose flesh like splendid insects with dazzling wings, marbled with carmine, dotted with morning gold, diapered with steel blue, streaked with peacock green."

Imagine my distress at finding that it was exactly in this ballet that Madame Pavlova was not to appear. A lady of the school I will have none of, a *première danseuse*, was to enact Thaïs. And what a mess Massenet and his dancing master have made of the story: a pagan festival of middle-class exuberance of the same order as the Fête de Neuilly; a courtesan to kindle deserts dowered with the circumspection of a young miss from school. Certain it is that no dancer who is not an actress could have made us see "the lids of her eyes shiver as the wings of a moth." This little affair of paper-roses and decorous, bare-footed young men, of modest shudderings and bashful comings-on would have sobered a Bacchante. Miss Pinkerton herself had not been alarmed.

A Note on Repertory

The function of art is to make us love what we have tried to love a hundred times before and found dull each time.
(*Adapted.*)

IS it just fancy that the general public is coming round, slowly, to the idea that the drama styled elevating is not such a boring affair after all, and that the bogey of theatrical education is nothing more fearsome than a means of getting more fun out of life.[1] Theatrical education is not, like Alice's growth, a tilting at the roof; it is a broadening of the base or scope of the mind, and may embrace both Ibsen's *Ghosts* and Mr Harry Tate's *Motoring*. It is a mistake to confuse intellectual plays, which undoubtedly exist, with intellectual acting which has no existence save in the apprehension of the timid. There are intellectual plays and there are stupid plays; there is good acting and there is bad. The snare of so-called intellectual acting is the supposition that transcendence of thought may excuse the commoner imperfections, that it does not matter what clayey pitfalls our actors stumble into, so long as their heads are generously in the clouds.

Now the acting demanded by the repertory play is exactly the same kind as that demanded by the commercial play. We should not forgive an actor at the St James's Theatre who could neither talk, walk, nor sit still, simply because of some imagined rarity of soul; and there is not the slightest reason for a different code of leniency

[1] Written before the Gaiety at Manchester went down into the bottomless pit of the kinema.

at the Court. Acting demands primarily not so much certain vague qualities of mind as certain very definite attributes of body. It is not of the first importance that an actor should hold the key to Marchbanks, or feel in the marrow of his bones the rottenness of Morell. It is essential that he should create a living being whom the spectator may fill out into Marchbanks or Morell. Punch and Judy have no understanding, yet their show is the most complete illusion of life. Puppetry is the first and all but the last word in acting; it is the point at which all schools converge. Coquelin, carefully sponging from his face all individual expression, then composing the empty mask into the likeness of another man's features; the elder Irving arrogating all other personalities to his own: both came to absolute life. The gift of living in front of an audience—not the fatal talent of looking like life—is not to be analysed. Tragedians have lacked it, mountebanks possessed it abundantly. Salvini and Dan Leno were rich in it; never a trace in Jane Hading's supremely clever calculations. The actors of Ibsen must act like actors first of all, and then like clever people if they can. This is what Mr Shaw means when he says that Ibsen makes demands upon a finer *technique* than English acting possesses. Technique, you notice, not brains. The actor in an Ibsen play is not concerned with the play's spiritual or literary merit. He is not concerned with anything beyond his own sense of the theatre, the spectator's sense of

the theatre, and the job of fusing the two. It is extraordinary how much can be done, even with Ibsen, by the professional duffer, the "sound and competent" actor. Such an actor may not have the brains of a hen, and yet be carried on to some kind of success by the perfection of his purely technical mechanism. On the other hand, not all the brains in the world, the nicest discrimination in the thinking out of a part that is psychologically all thumbs, are of much avail to a man who does not quite know what to do with his hands. In other words, acting is a temperamental art. In the realm of pure reason there may be an art of intellectual acting; on the stage there can never be other than temperamental actors. There is nothing the temperamental actor cannot do, even if he has to get other brains to help him; but there is nothing the intellectual actor *can* do, if he have the brains of a Bacon and lack the stage-temperament. Mr Esmé Percy played Tanner in *Man and Superman* very much better than I have ever seen it played because he simply played it like an actor and not like a thinker. It is true that temperamental acting does no better with writing of the quality of Mr Shaw's than it does with other people's rubbish. Only it is saved the bother of transfiguring the rubbish. A good actor will be just as effective in *Maria Martin* as in *Othello*; and it takes a good actor to do justice to both. When you come to the actor who gets all there is to be got out of both tragedy and barn-storming, and is

immeasurably finer in tragedy, then you know that you are in the presence of the great actor. The finest compliment ever paid to a repertory company was when a popular actor-manager, speaking of the Court Theatre as a rival attraction, said: "It is not the plays that do us the damage; it is the acting!"

The first essential for the actors of intellectual plays is, then, that they shall be temperamentally competent. But the writers of these plays have a habit of demanding a good deal more even than that. When Henry James asked of his immemorial butler: "And to whom do you, beautifully, belong?" he assumed his actor capable of adumbrating in a single gesture the New World's view of the Old. And he assumed the audience capable of taking that gesture in. When Mr Gilbert Cannan asked a lady in one of his plays: "What really was the man to whom you always beautifully belonged? What manner of man was this of whom you are becoming more and more perfectly the widow?" he should have realised that neither actors nor audience could by any manner of possibility be up to it. For was not he, the author, up against the tyranny of the temperamental actor's view of what constitutes a good part and of how a good part should be played? Must there not, inevitably, be the "note" of the widowed lady? Temperamental actors will always find you a "note" with which they can hit off, simply and unerringly, and without confusion or mistake, a

character which may be to the author who has created it all confusion and compromise, half-assertion and half-denial. The "note" of charwomen is tearful penury, of cabmen huskiness, of soldiers the uppishness of Corioli. Must not the "note" of the widow be the inevitable mixture of archness and resignation? Elaboration and subtlety in the theatre—are they, after all, worth while—since you can never get from the "note" anything but bell-like certainty and directness? The audience, too, will they not want a "dramatic" conflict, not of ideas but of happenings, some common hammer-and-tongs of action to keep the play, as it were, "alive"? So even the intellectual playwright is tempted to give up the magnificent thing as impossible, in view of the actor's ineradicable preference for "notes," his unconquerable aversion to coming on the stage at all until less important characters have played the audience to their seats, his determination to be on the stage, and in the middle of it, when the curtain comes down and applause is going. If the intellectual playwright is to do any good, he must be seconded by actors who have temperamental genius, and the intelligence to suppress all that the temperamental actor, as a rule, thinks it incumbent upon him to stress.

A great critic talks somewhere of surveying Ibsen's idealism "from the clear ether above, which can only be reached through its mists"—that is, through the mists of idealism. The

plain man will have to do a deal of striving to break through the clouds of such a play as *Rosmersholm*, to rub his eyes industriously and peer hard, if he is to be rewarded by so much as a glimpse of the top. Frankly, one feels that criticism in this case is rather like leading up a climb you have not done before. The drama is the purest symbolism, a play not of life but of the philosophy of life. "People don't do such things" as Rosmer, his wife and Rebecca contrive to do in this play, or if they did we should think the world gone mad. But we should think the world gone mad if poets, philosophers, reformers acted their dreams instead of dreaming them, and that is just what Ibsen's people do. They are pegs for ideas, and we are to care little for what happens to the pegs and everything for what happens to the ideas. Who, that knows the plays well, wants to weep at Oswald, or is distressed at Lövborg's wound in the stomach, and Hedda's in the temple? Who cares how many steeples Solness topples from, or is moved by the threefold drowning in the mill stream at Rosmersholm? And yet these were moving things if we had not been preoccupied with the tragedy of idea, the disaster that crowns high effort, the struggle to progress further, not perhaps in a clearly-defined direction, but somehow further than we are now. It is not the physical or actual agonies of these people that are, in Whitman's fine phrase, among our changes of garments, it is the agony of the propelling

philosophy that we wear. The danger of doing right, of going forward, the hazard of all ideals is the theme of *Rosmersholm.* Rebecca sets Rosmer's mission and high purpose against his wife's existence, unhesitatingly sacrificing the wife. Rosmer sets his own faith in his mission against Rebecca's existence, and ruthlessly destroys her. Only the Rosmersholm tradition, the idea of expiation, forces him to throw his life away with hers. In the play the sacrifice is of life to an ideal; on the stage it is one of flesh and blood to ideas. It is Ibsen's old insistence on the relativity of right and wrong to one's particular step on the road. Note that it is always the people with ideals who do the mischief. Brand's saintly, Mrs Alving's domestic, and Hedda's neurotic idealisms bring about all sorts of havoc, and yet these people are on the side of the angels, or at least not actively on the devil's. In these plays the black sheep do the least harm. Martensgard the disreputable, the scorner of ideals, is the man to whom the poor bring their troubles, and by some he is accorded the victor. Ulric, the drunken charlatan with a touch of genius, is kicked into the gutter by the man he has reviled. Rebecca herself would be a power for good to Rosmer and his mission, if it were not that the three-cornered household is a scandalous affair. One feels that she lacked the courage to do a little wrong and did a greater, whilst the wife, taking the coward's course courageously and drowning

herself, brought about the shattering of this little world. It would seem that the only way to keep upright in the apparent topsy-turvydom, is to fasten resolutely upon some idea (it does not much matter what) that Ibsen seems to be working out, and let the rest go hang. The idea at the back of *Rosmersholm* seems to be that the greater an ideal's power for good, the greater its danger. Without some such clue the play is meaningless, even dull.

People who call themselves Ibsenites — a deplorable but sufficiently convenient classification—are curiously bad tacticians. Surely it is the business of the Ibsenite to recognise the futility of fighting on all sides at once, to choose his battle-ground and take his stand on Ibsen as a writer of plays for the theatre, as an artist with a vehicle of expression, and not as a preacher with a message. The point which has never been made with sufficient emphasis is the magnificence of the plays as plays. Ibsen crops up vaguely in the general mind as the biggest man of a school in revolt against the "well-made play"; by inference as the apostle of clumsy and careless construction, compensated by any amount of purpose. No idea could be more foolish. There was, of course, wonderful dexterity in the old plays. When Scribe intended his heroine to sniff at a poisoned bouquet in Act V., he took care to explain the possibilities of poison by inhalation in Act I. Ibsen's ingenuity is equally amazing, but it is not concerned with daggers

and bowls. In *A Doll's House* Nora clearly foreshadows the end by saying to the children's nurse: "And if my little ones had nobody else, I am sure you would——," and then, putting the idea away from her: "Nonsense, nonsense!" Any serious study of the plays must reveal that they are the tightest, tautest, sparest pieces of writing in the literature of the stage. And we may be quite certain that an author who will not allow himself a word too many, means us to take the words he does use at their fullest value. Adopting this principle, there is very little doubt that we must find in Helmer something more than the normal conventional husband, the owner of a pretty wife and an elegant flat with a tasteful flower-pot in the front window. Helmer is an incorrigible æsthete. "Nobody has such exquisite taste as you," says Nora. Helmer can't bear to see dressmaking; he suggests embroidery, which is pretty, in place of knitting, which is ugly and "Chinese." He notices the red flowers on the Christmas tree. (Please remember that there is no idle chatter in Ibsen, and that every word is of vital importance.) He looks upon Rank's sufferings as a cloudy background to the sunshine of his own happiness, whilst Rank will not have him in his sickroom—"Helmer's delicate nature shrinks so from all that is horrible." Nor can we doubt that Ibsen intended to convey a considerable sensualism as well. The scene after the dance is one of the most searching things on the stage. Helmer is drunk, or at least, he has had a good deal of

champagne, and the whole scene seems intended to show that Nora was never a wife, never more than a legalised mistress. Helmer has not the brains to realise this when he is sober, and he masks his unsuspected self with all the egregious cant about sheltering wings that Mr Shaw gave us again in Morell. On this interpretation Helmer is quite convincing, and his rage at discovering his mistress-wife more fool than knave is perfectly reasonable. There is great superficial resemblance between Helmer and Morell, but we cannot imagine Morell behaving to Candida as Helmer did to Nora. But then Morell is neither æsthete nor sensualist, and is much closer to the normal husband than Helmer. Helmer is abnormal; this fact admitted, the play hangs together. Make him normal, and the play leaves us with the unpleasant conviction that none of us should 'scape whipping.

The conviction that Verhaeren's *The Cloister* is a great dramatic poem is not appreciably weakened by the fact that a fine performance by Mr William Poel and a Belgian performance in the original still leave us fumbling with a sense of tragedy imperfectly accounted for. Perhaps a certain unaccountableness is essential to these soaring dramas of the spirit, if they are really to soar: which of us would circumscribe *Hamlet* with too complete an understanding? Mr George Moore has laid it down that "great art dreams, imagines, sees, feels, expresses—reasons never,"

to which one would add the corollary that if art is not to reason she must be careful not to handle matter which cries out principally for argument. The difficulty with *The Cloister* is that its unaccountableness is of dual quality: a loftiness of spirit transcending and scorning reason, combined with poverty of thinking on the lower planes. There is much theological disputation in the play, but it gets no further than Thomas's "Since God cannot be Evil and since we can have fear of evil things alone, it must follow that it is wrong to preach that 'the Fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom,'" to which Balthazar replies: "You reason too much," instead of, more properly: "You reason too loosely. The Awe of the Omnipotent and the dread of Evil are different kinds of fear." Unprofitable then must be the ensuing theological arraignments and defences by two such faulty logicians.

Now take the more tangible conflict of the play, Balthazar's urgency to confess his crime. He is a parricide of ten years' standing, has received absolution from the Prior, and risen to such eminence in his Order that the supreme leadership is to be his. We are told that the whole safety and survival of the monastery depends upon Balthazar's acceptance of the leadership. Is he to accept these blushing honours without publicly blushing for his crime? Must he give himself up to civil justice and bring ruin on his Order? An old catch stated over and over again in all the theatres of the world.

Russian drama wants to know whether a judge may sentence a woman he has ruined. The throes of Mr Hall Caine in similar perturbation are familiar. M. Bernstein wants to know whether a Prime Minister is any the worse for having, as a young man with all sorts of extenuating circumstances and with a consumptive mistress, decamped with the petty cash. We seem to remember something of a woman in Sudermann who commits suicide, lest her indiscretions should prejudice her husband's political career. And there is a good deal on the same subject in a Shakespearean play in which an admirable State policeman suffers for his private misdeeds. In all cases the conflict lies between a purely selfish expiation and a continuance in public usefulness. The extraordinary and unsatisfying thing about *The Cloister*—absorbing in its potentialities of spiritual conflict—is that there is no conflict in the soul of Balthazar. All the motives that present themselves for analysis are ignored—the visionary's insistence on truth before all other material considerations, the conviction that a religious Order had better be destroyed than founded on a lie. Then there are the more modern possibilities—the inability of the inefficient criminal to hold his tongue, a pathological condition of the nervous system after Dostoievski, a perverse and Huysmans-like indulgence in the luxuries of self-abasement. As to all these, silence—simply a blind espousal of a motiveless obstinacy. And nothing is more

disconcerting in the theatre than a flood of passion of which we cannot trace the rational source.

And yet, if we can but discard intellectual analysis, and concede to Mr Moore that the proper and single plane of great art is the emotional, what a marvellous play it is! What gusts of passion blow through it, tearing to tatters the murky and obscuring clouds of logical precision. Admire the rich and sombre tapestry of Verhaeren's verse, the use of sacred symbols, the martyr's tale of agony and redemption, yoke and palm! The lines glow with the enthusiasm of stained glass, with the fervour and urgency of the gilding upon the images of saints; an entire idiom is evoked that would drown reason with its organ notes, and shame to silence with the hush of high altars. Of what avail are the definitions of philosophy confronted with the soul which has become "un bouquet de flammes," or how justly to appraise a crime now "un mal rouge et griffu," to be confessed to brother-confessors and washed away "dans les eaux d'or de leur prières"? These are matters of faith and not reason. Balthazar's superb "Moi, j'ai la passion, j'ai la rage de Dieu," rides rough-shod over the sceptic and the questioner, followed as it is by the declaration: "Il est autant plus Dieu qu'on ne le comprend pas." The whole of Balthazar's ecstasy of abasement turns to an elaborate rhapsody on our own Richard's luxurious theme: "What must the King do now? Must he submit?" Must

Balthazar be deposed? Balthazar shall be contented. Must he lose the name of monk? O' God's name let it go. His offence shall smell publicly to heaven, and nothing to Balthazar are the inviolacy of the Order, the knowledge that with his downfall the whole edifice must crumble away. Ignominy is his and he will have it; so the play tightens like a cord round the temples, until the passion of pride gives way in the torrent of self-abasement. And the fall of the curtain brings an almost physical relief.

The Education of Mr Surrage shows Mr Allan Monkhouse in quest of the comic rhythm in things tragic. Matter most convenient for tears is often the proper food of thoughtful laughter; and human frailty, deftly and wittily pilloried, is quick to take an appropriate revenge in a heightened appeal to our sensibilities. And to the writer's sensibilities, too; in the presence of his pilloried wretches he is, unwillingly if you like, all excuse and understanding. This light and pleasant air of things not mattering too overwhelmingly, of being less than tragic, is a critical safeguard, a livery of discretion, warning us to laugh with care.

The Education of Mr Surrage is all about a good ordinary soul who cannot, for the life of him, see why a great artist should not be a good man. And it is also all about a great artist who cannot, for the life of him, see why anybody should bother about his being either

a good man or a bad one, since *being* anything is no concern of his. His business is looking on, and when his own conduct is in question he is still only a looker-on. Let us, to clear the ground, begin with the simplest form of the antithesis—the good man who spends all his time in behaving himself and not thinking about the arts, and the artist who spends all his time in creating works of art and not thinking at all about behaviour. Such a general contrast in type, let us say, as Beardsley describes in his poem of the woodland musician who

> "Fills the air with Gluck and fills
> The tweeded tourist's soul with scorn."

Shall we now qualifiy the general statement so far as to consider that the tweeded tourist is a man who will accept unreservedly the dictum of Matthew Arnold that "conduct is three parts of life," it being understood that the remaining part, which might conceivably be devoted to the arts, must follow, even if devoted thereto, in the wake of conduct? And let us admit that the artist is a being who will accept equally unreservedly the dictum that "the conduct of others is the whole interest of life," and who will place his own conduct amongst the general ruck of behaviour, in the general swim of interest; a thing to be considered, "seen," and "placed," and of no more moment to him than that of the indifferent others. The good man moves in a world of actions, the artist in a sphere

of thought. Now Mr Monkhouse's play is an attempt at a reconciliation; an insistence, first that there is a common ground, and then an endeavour to find the common ground where the good man shall think finely and the fine artist behave properly.

The scheme of the play is brilliantly trivial. There are three young folk, intellectuals all, bent on "improving" an honest innocent of a parent. The children invite to their father's house an advanced dramatist, an advanced painter who is starving, and a woman with advanced views on the art of living. The playwright turns out pure puppy, the artist is a thief, and the woman has deserted her lover in his hour of need. A precious trio of humbugs, an easy peg for a lecture on the spurious thing called the artistic temperament. But Mr Monkhouse knows his stage better than to preach from it. The scheme of the play is comic; the father outgrows his formidable children. He noses unerringly the mediocrity of the playwright-puppy and does not back him; he turns the artist-thief into a "commercial proposition," and regularises the woman's affair with her lover. "Why don't you think instead of bleating and baa-ing like a lot of sheep when you come up against anything you are not accustomed to?" says the artist in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, and Surrage, our good, honest hero, has to do some very hard thinking indeed. In entire sincerity and humility, Surrage—and we feel that Mr Monkhouse

is very deeply with him — will have it that there must be an essential relation between fine imagination and sober conduct. He is impatient of the formal choice between a world of good men and bad pictures, and a world of good pictures and bad men. Some common factor of good in inspired imagination and honest conduct—that is his quest. He sets out on it with equal faith in the unshakableness of the case for the Good Man, and in the sincerity of the arguments of unruliness. If the artist is not "respectable" it is at least conceivable that he is obeying a different code of Respectability. If he is a thief, then you must set against the filching of a few pounds the fact that he will starve for the sake of his work. Then hear his temperamental "Paints wonderful pictures, does he? But what's the good of a trick like that? What's his character?" The artist's mistress moves him to strange elations. He talks of her *liaison* as a "degradation" and an "abyss" —and yet this woman haunts and fires his imagination. They are tragic, these three. Surrage has his hour of divination; he is moved by an embrace of the artist, at which begins understanding between them. He climbs nobly, his concessions are finely imaginative; and to the artist is given the dignity of a great certainty. The play, despite its kindly obsession of the comic spirit, has not been conceived without agony. The author arrives at the end to "We must cultivate our gardens," only the

formula has now become "We must get things straight."

Now all this, even if we admit the philosophy, is a little steep for the stage. How much steeper when you realise that Mr Monkhouse is too good a thinker to make an irresistible force of artistry come up against an immovable wall of behaviour. The good man and the artist do not engage in a hand-to-hand fight. Each of them espouses the other's cause in a desperate attempt to come at his point of view. The good man does battle for high thinking, and the artist begins to see something in fine doing. But this is not actable, you say, and we must admit that it is too delicate to suffer the grossness of "situations," "comic business," and all the numbing traffic of the stage. A character in a play may run the whole gamut of grave comic emotion without the stir of finger or eyelid, and we can be enthralled. But let not the actors move. Let there not be a comic butler, played by a comic actor with a genius for rib-tickling, to throw emotion out of gear. The fabric of this play must tumble to ruins, even if it be acted by the finest actors in the world—so gross a medium is the stage—unless the actors will consent to sit still, and read out of the book the fine things in which it so exquisitely abounds. For the emotions of these characters are never the broad impulses that come to the surface ; they cannot be expressed in terms of facial expression and crossings from left to right. Rather are they so many spiritual revisions,

rearrangements of points of view, adoptions of new moral standpoints. So that the more "acting" put into such a play as this, the more difficult becomes the emotion, the further from us does the play recede.

St John Hankin's *The Last of the De Mullins* has many excellences: a caustic humour at the ready service of all the humbugs, a gentle wit for the rallying of the helpless and the self-effaced, a comic outlook upon life that has abounding charity. And yet we may think that if Hankin had foreseen the brilliant work of the theatre that a later dramatist was afterwards to build on the same scene, he would have added to his solid and major excellences some of the vim, the snap, the theatrical opportunism, the more showy virtue of *Hindle Wakes*. Both plays are concerned with what at first sight looks like the young woman's rejection of "the handsome thing." But the handsome thing is no longer handsome when it is the young rip who has been seduced and is now thrown over by the strong-minded heroine, whose desire for experience and motherhood is satisfied. With this difference, that Fanny desired experience and Janet De Mullins motherhood, the theme of both plays is the same, the rejection of the amende honorable.

The play is on a much lower level of theatrical achievement than *Hindle Wakes*. Look at the easy, first-hand fascination of Houghton's play, with its genial air of escapade, its evasions and

confrontations, its browbeatings, its persistence in hopeless denials, its sudden throwing up of the sponge. The bad graces of young hopeful, the morals of the cotton manufacturer, the manners of his womenfolk—how amusing they are! And how exciting and compelling in the theatre, how definitely you feel you must know the end of the story! Now take the Hankin. Stripped of the thousand and one aids the theatre has at command to prod you into interest, the play is bereft of the legitimate compulsion of the story that is being unfolded before you. It has all happened when the curtain goes up—the betrayal and the parties' several ways out of the dilemma. Young sprig ran away only to learn of the consequences of his act after ten years; she to found a hat shop in London. The *scène à faire* is simply what face the young gentleman will wear when there is the possibility of his *fiancée* being confronted by his victim and his nine-year-old son. Old De Mullins, the last of his effete race, wants the former union of the couple regularising, if only that he may adopt the boy and confer on him the De Mullins tradition. But Janet is as clear-minded and as determined as Fanny, and all Houghton's arguments — or Fanny's — are anticipated. Where we do think the Hankin immeasurably the finer play is in the greater momentum and more certain direction of the thought behind it. "To do as I did," says Janet, "needs pluck and brains — and five hundred pounds." Houghton did just see that Fanny

could afford to defy her parents and to indulge openly in divergence from a recognised code of conduct, because, her labour in the mill being a marketable commodity, she was independent as far as food, clothing, and shelter are concerned. But Hankin's Janet is much more explicit. "Pluck, brains, and five hundred pounds—everything that most women haven't got, poor things. So they must marry or remain childless." Hankin shows a great deal of intellectual courage in this play. He sees, for instance, that if Janet's shop had been a financial failure, her moral right to a child and her right to reject marriage and a father for the child would have been weaker. He sees that a girl without either brains or five hundred pounds has not the moral right to a child. In this play morality is not allowed to mount her customary high horse, or if she rides him she rides him with an economic curb.

Cackle and 'Osses

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force;
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill;
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse.
SHAKESPEARE'S *Sonnets.*

THE ruling passion strong in death. But how if there be two which shall depose Fear? Will, from its cloudy fellows, one ghost of old desire emerge palpable at the last? Englishmen there have been who have desired music, have asked to be seated at a window opening upon sunset and the everlasting hills, or craved the boon to look again upon their beloved.

"Before my light goes out for ever if God should give me choice of graces,
I would not reck of length of days, nor crave for things to be;
But cry: One day of the great lost days, one face of all the faces,
Grant me to see and touch once more and nothing more to see."

But in general our English temper is more nearly akin to that of the trencherman in La Fontaine who, on hearing the physician's sentence of death, sent for the remainder of the turbot which had destroyed him. Can it be that at the end the physical shall rage grotesque battle with the spiritual, and a man desire to be hymned to a last supper in the rays of the setting sun? It better flatters man's dignity to endow him with a crescendo of passions, of which the grandest

shall strike fortissimo at the last. Falstaff's dying babble—if the passage be not simply an emendation—fills the believers with pity, but also with a trifle of doubt. That a' cried out of sack is agreed; the green fields can only be the brimming over of his creator's cup of beauty. But did courage fail the author that we are given the scene at second hand? Was there fear lest the pit empty itself to the cry of: "They have killed poor Jack!" Why not have launched him into the next world on a great burst of laughter? And why did Dickens falter? Why give that care to little Nell, moribund from her earliest tear, which should have gone to compose the limbs of that other immortal, worthy to be with Jack in paradise? Better Micawber in his grave than in unspeakable Port Middlebay! "Nothing is more worthy of lamentation," it has been well said, "than when a lazy poet winds up his catastrophe awkwardly, and, bestowing too little care on his fifth act, dismisses the hero with a sneaking and private exit, who had in the former part of the drama performed such notable exploits as must promise to every good judge among the spectators a noble, public and exalted end." But I digress, and though digressions are, incontestably, "the sunshine, the life of reading," I must to my muttons.

Or rather, to my horses. My ruling passion is the show-pony, little brother to the Hackney. This is surely one of the gentlest and least harmful of hobby-horses that ever lifted leg. "That

which excites so lively and lasting an interest in itself, even though it should not be wisdom, is not despicable in the sight of reason and humanity." But I will not be at pains to defend my passion. "By God, 'tis good; and if you like't, you may!"

I know nothing of the thoroughbred. I am strangely nervous in the presence of Sir Mulberry Hawke, his owner; Mr Pluck, his trainer; Mr Pyke, his jockey. I am unnecessarily shy of Mr Kenneth de la Zouche, well known at Tattenham's, who never owes, who has a hundred thousand pounds waiting for me at his bank. I go in unreasoning dread of Mr "Issy" Schuncks and Mr "Mossy" Rubenstein. I have for these very harmless people, naked allusion to whom without the prefix "popular" is, surely, the purest *lèse majesté*, the same antipathy that the gentleman in the detective story had for pieces of paper of the wrong shape. When I was a small boy, "Pitcher" and "The Dwarf of Blood" filled me with the same terror. Such arch-knowingness could only be malignant. When, later, I came to meet journalists in the flesh, and saw them take their babes upon their knees, this oppression grew less. But "the enclosure" and "the paddock" remain, to my grown-up dread, caverns of iniquity measureless to man. So long as Alpha, Xanadu and Kubla Khan stand in the names of his Majesty the King, the Lord Chief Justice or the Minister for Waste I am a little reassured. But even then I want to know

whether these august owners may enter their horses' boxes and turn back their rugs, send them out for a spin and see for themselves how they gallop. What would be said were Mr Hyman Leberwurst, the proud owner of Pleasure Dome, to insist upon matching him the week before the great race for a friendly mile and a half with Mr Abe Tiergarten's Mount Abora? And yet I have never known the owner of the favourite for Richmond or Olympia who would not "give you a show." I doubt whether the owner of the Derby-winner derives as much fun from his fifty-thousand-guinea animal as the sporting butcher, who wins first prize in his local tradesman's class, gets out of his fifty-pound pony. That cannot be done without some practice of horse-flesh; the Emperor of China may win the blue riband without leaving his willow-pattern throne.

I have nothing to say against racing as a form of dice or cards. Backing your fancy is an exciting amusement, and betting only contemptible when kept within your means—morally contemptible, that is. To exceed what you can afford may be the highest financial wisdom. "Many are undone," said that great authority, Mr Jonathan Wild, "by not going deep enough in roguery; as in gaming any man may be a loser who doth not play the whole game." But I am not persuaded that one backer in ten thousand plays the whole game, or has any eye for roguery or the horse itself. Your city clerk

cannot distinguish windgall from spavin, speedy-cut from seedy-toe. At most he will demand assurance that the coat is glossy—a *sine qua non* gleaned from the Nat Goulds of his wetted thumb—but he cannot tell you whether the neck is "put on the right way." In his bets he is guided entirely by the papers; he "follows" Archimandrite. This gentleman, I take it, is more ingenuous than knavish. His perfectly honest statement would be: You will lose money in any case; lose the smallest possible amount by following me. Archimandrite does not, in point of fact, claim to be infallible, but implies that you *make* more money by following him than by following, say, Neophyte. The truth is that whether his "information" be the result of eavesdropping or bribery, forgathering with owners at the Carlton or drinking with stable boys at the Pig and Whistle, or even, in the last resort, of personal observation, it merely complicates the issue. Whereas in any race of seventeen starters it cannot be more than 16 to 1 against finding the winner by blind chance, the weighing of "information" and "form" throws infinity into the scales against you. "Partner," said an impatient bridge-player, "if you play the first card that comes into your head it can never be more than 12 to 1 against it being the right card; if you stop to think it may be millions." Then there is the question as to whether the horse you "fancy" is a genuine trier. "The odds against any horse being sent out to win,"

a wit once declared, "are the same as the odds against a future life—*a shade worse than 5 to 2.*"

It is a sunny morning in June and the day of the Dental Gold Plate. I am a city clerk and have charge of the firm's petty cash. On the way to business I open my paper, and compel my God-given sense and soul to the urgency of some such trash as you shall now peruse:

THE DENTAL GOLD PLATE

Will Ratelier Win?

By Archimandrite

I stick to my guns that Ratelier is the best thing in the race. The stable's confidence in him is unbounded, and he looked worthy of it yesterday, going in grand fettle. Of course there are blotches on his record, notably his recent failure against Gold Filling. But his connections are satisfied to ignore his running at Liverpool, and look to him to reproduce his Newmarket form. He has entirely got over his laminitis, and there is no truth in the rumour that he went very short in his gallop yesterday. Gold Filling is officially proclaimed fit and well, and no excuse, barring bad luck, can possibly be offered should he fail. Amalgam is probably the most genuine candidate in the race. When well and fancied he has never failed to run gamely. Forceps has plenty of chance. His stamina should make up for his being rather on the slow side. Tonsilla does not need to be an uncom-

monly good mare to win at 7 st. 2. Her great speed should make up for her being something lacking in substance, Etherea has a following and so has Novocaine, whilst there are late tips for Mucilage and Salivation. Painless is reckoned a good thing by the stable, provided she keeps cool and businesslike. Extraction is another well "expected" animal, and with good reason, if he can be trusted to reproduce his form of last year. One or two of his displays this season, however, have been of so scrappy a nature that I am afraid to trust him myself, and shall leave him with the remark that he is in the best possible hands. Bridge-Work, if willing to display the powers he shows at home, may win easily, whilst Exposed Nerve is always dangerous. Tragacanth, whose tendons gave way so badly a fortnight ago that she had to be eased in preparation, has, I hear, sufficiently recovered to beat this week those very moderate animals Resin, Arabic, and Copal in a five-furlong gallop. At the time of writing the mare is apparently sound, but her popular owner, Lord Aussie Hut, tells me that she has no chance whatever. The weather, too, will be against her. In my opinion the mare is to be left severely alone. The selection of the winner is, in the circumstances, most difficult. However, my duty to my readers is a thing not to be shirked. All things considered, I am confident that, if nothing untoward happens, the going suits him, he gets well away, and meets with no bad luck in the race,

RATELIER WILL WIN

with Gold Filling and Exposed Nerve as his most dangerous opponents.

I spend the early part of the morning wondering whether the petty cash can stand yet another ten shillings.

At a quarter to ten the evening-paper race-special comes out. Here I read the following :—

WHAT THEY SAY

The Dental Gold Plate

"Archimandrite"	Ratelier 1, Gold Filling 2, Exposed Nerve 3
"Neophyte"	Exposed Nerve 1, Gold Filling 2, Ratelier 3
Sportsman, "Watchman"	Ratelier or Gold Filling
Sporting Life, "Vampire"	Ratelier 1, Forceps 2, Exposed Nerve 3
Sporting Chronicle, "Tympanum"	Gold Filling or Ratelier
Times	Forceps
Telegraph	Tonsilla e. w.
Morning Post	Ratelier or Gold Filling
Advertiser	Ratelier
Graphic	Ratelier
Daily News, "Cassandra"	Ratelier
Mail	Ratelier

Chronicle . . .	Forceps
Daily Herald . .	Ratelier
Mirror . . .	Ratelier, if ab. Bridge-Work
Sketch . . .	Bridge-Work, if ab. Ratelier
Sunday Herald .	Ratelier
Sunday Pictorial .	Ratelier
H. and Hounds .	Ratelier
Lic. Vic. Gaz. . .	Mucilage
Sporting Times .	Ratelier

Ratelier seems a sure thing. The porter on my station shouts Rattle 'Ere; the bus conductor announces that Rattle 'Ere is well and good; my barber whispers Rattle 'Ere; the bootblack breathes Rattle 'Ere into my boots; the newsboys give Rattle 'Ere to the world at large. With all these and the great Archimandrite at my back, I abstract ten shillings, nay, five half-crowns. If Ratelier comes home I shall be able to make good the week's pilferings without having recourse to my watch.

At three o'clock precisely, at far-away Epsom, a little cloud of horses leaves the post. The world stands still.

At three-seventeen a hoarse voice proclaiming "Winner of the Dental Plite"—and plight it turns out to be—throws me down my pen. Hatless I emerge into the street, and struggle with half a hundred other hatless "sportsmen." Hardly can we hold the sheet.

In one corner names and figures swim before our eyes. The mist clears and we read:

Tragacanth 1
Laughing Gas 2
Waiting Room 3
66-1, 100-7, 40-1
Ratelier finished last

Never mind! The petty cash will be made good to-morrow. Archimandrite promises something "extra" for the Consolation Stakes.

No; I am no horseman in this sense. I would give all your layers and takers for that old Yorkshire farmer who, on his death-bed, raised his head for the last time at the sound of Ophelia, the great Hackney mare, walking one-two-three-four down the village street. You are not going to tell me that at the end the supreme passions of men differ in intensity. Man cannot fool himself higher than the top of his bent, and when it comes to the last, all ecstasies are equal. "A horse," say you, being a poet, "is only a horse." But to a horseman a poet is only a poet. Your horseman would give nothing to have talked with Shelley: I would give half I possess to have seen Ophelia plain. "He who has done a single thing that others never forget, and feel ennobled whenever they think of, need not regret his having been, and may throw aside this fleshly coil, like any other worn-out part, grateful and contented." Then why should not the

horseman die content who has bred an immortal mare?[1]

It may be nothing to you how the great Ophelia was bred, who, as they say, she was by. But will you swear that you always know whom the novels you read are by? I know nothing more pitiably foolish than the pictures in the illustrated papers of our aristocracy on horseback. "The Duchess of Euston at the Willesden Meet," with all that matters—the front and quarters of her mount—cut off before and behind the saddle. Who cares whether her Grace is deep through the heart, well ribbed-up and stands on short legs, is quiet in all traffic, sound in wind and limb, no day too long? Her quality is taken for granted; in all fairness let the horse speak for himself.

What a piece of work is a horse! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and

[1] The present year has seen the death of the founder of the great stud of Hackney harness horses which flourished in the eighties. Apart from the feat of his marriage, Burdett-Coutts's claim to remembrance rests undoubtedly upon the judgment he displayed in connection with the Brookfield stud. Yet we find the author of a fulsome two-column obituary in *The Daily Telegraph* dismissing in a single sentence this one real achievement. "For a time Mr Burdett-Coutts interested himself in a fine stud of Hackney horses, with yearly sales attended by everybody, and with him as gracious and popular host." The writer goes on: "For in time he had lived down all the mutinous disapproval which naturally visits a young man who marries an elderly and a rich lady."
What humbugs we are! Which of us with the courage to embrace the means to indulge a ruling passion will, later, consent "to live a coward in his own esteem"? If Coutts was anything of a philosopher he knew that jealousy and not outraged propriety was at the root of this "mutinous disapproval," and that his critics were so many green-eyed cats i' the adage. He must have known, too, that whereas Westminster is small, the Yorkshire moors are big; and that the clatter of hoofs is a better sound in heaven than the chatter of Mayfair.

moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a man! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! Never was there a more erroneous conception than that the good fellow, the horse, occasions the worst in man. Rather does he bring out all that doing and daring, the willingness to take risks, to speculate and to *deal* which Mr Gordon Selfridge has declared to be man's vocation on this earth. This eminent storekeeper, if I am to believe an interviewer, would have us counter-jumpers all. The Englishman, he complains, is too apt to throw over in favour of his games that pursuit of business which is the greatest game of all. But here he forgets the horse-dealer, with whom trade is the ruling passion, not only of a death-bed, but of a lifetime. The horse-dealer does not breathe who lacks the fervour of the disciple, the obstinacy of the fanatic, the ecstasy of the martyr. His soul is a fire that dieth not. For him the Persian invented the motto "The Buyer hath Need of a Thousand Eyes, the Seller but One." They were money-changers and not swoppers of horses who on that Jewish morning submitted to the upsetting of their tables. "I've been had many a time, and I've had a few in my time, but when it's all reckoned up I've had the best end of the deal," is a form of repentance which likes me. The old Yorkshire fancier whom I quote had ever been one of Nature's heroes. When he died the walls of his house were found papered with writs. "To

show them as come after me as a *gen'lm'n* lived here." I am never tired of the story of his encounter with the bailiffs, a story illustrative of resource in emergency. Arriving home to find the officers busy with the tale of his chairs and tables, he went into the garden and returned with a hive of bees. These he released point-blank into the unwelcome faces. "Since yo're so fond o' numberin'," he shouted, "yo con count these."

Selling horses calls for the art which in many a powerful column has been claimed for the selling of boots. The style may be that of Callisthenes but the voice is the voice of Gordon. Now the selling of boots, suit-cases, and motor-cars calls not for art but the diplomacy of the counter. The things are dead matter turned out at so much a thousand. The only factory in which the horse is turned out is God's. Your super-storeman will say: "Granted that boots and suit-cases are machine-made and liker than peas in a pod, the art of salesmanship consists in getting the consumer to consume at my establishment." By which he means that his salesmen are pleasanter and better-mannered, the knife-edge in their trousers more sharply defined, their hair and nails more highly polished, than at the establishment down the street. We must make an emendation. God created man in His image that he might stand behind a counter. The standard by which a motor-car is appraised is a mathematical one. How runs the equation?

$$\frac{\text{Power of Cylinders}}{\text{Petrol consumption}} \times \text{Durability} = \text{Price}$$

Not even the dapper little gentlemen who foist these soulless things upon you will dissent from such a proposition. But who is the fellow who will estimate his horse in terms of

$$\frac{\text{Haulage capacity}}{\text{Cost of keep}} \times \text{Length of days} = \text{Value?}$$

One car is as good as another if it will do the same thing for the same length of time at the same cost. The test for beauty is the same as in the case of the big gun, the aeroplane, or any other engine for the destruction of man—the test of efficiency. Whereas the horse will answer, thank God, to every other test under heaven. Who that owns a car can spend an evening with it in its stable without butchery, and a whole ritual of evisceration reminiscent of fourteenth-century *Messes Noires*? You cannot commune with ironmongery without taking it to pieces. Whereas you can talk to your nag in kindness and even gather something of his replies. "He who has seen tree-tops bend before the wind or a horse move knows all that there is to be known of the art of dancing," says an old writer upon Æsthetics. The gleanings of him who has spent hours by the road-side with a broken axle do not go beyond immobility. But the whole case for beauty in the car is given away by its proper advocates. What panegyrist of mechanical traction is there who, after a picture of the road gleaming white

in the moonlight, will refrain from saying that the driver "opened out her throttle and felt the car bound beneath him *like a live thing*"? Whereas the horse is a live thing. . . .

The value of a motor-car may be determined by a computation of the cost of production plus the margin of profit current in the trade. Roughly it is worth a thousand pounds or it is not. If it be worth a thousand pounds you will get that sum for it, and I, who know less about a car than Mr Harry Tate's assistant, will, after a visit to a shop assistant's tailor and three weeks' tuition in the art of "approaching" customers, sell as many as the next fellow. You can sell a car on paper, by specification, before it is made. Twenty thousand young sprigs are there who, were they driven to earn their own living, would take to selling Rolls-Royces as easily as Jews to money-lending. They have only to stare through the shop windows of Bond Street from the other side. But give them a poor horse, worth twelve hundred when he is fit, and ask them to get that sum for him! For the value of a horse is not determined by the supply and demand ruling in the trade, so much as by what you can persuade the customer to think of him as an individual. This is the selling which is an art.

Of what cylindered thing could you write such a description as this of Ophelia?

"The first time I ever saw her was at Lord Londesborough's Stud Farm, near Market

Weighton. I was driving along the road and she was running in the fields. When she heard the rattle of our trap she raised her head, pricked up her ears and stood at attention, a living picture I shall never forget. She had a perfect head and neck, full of character, going back with beautiful symmetry into splendidly sloped shoulders that only Denmark could hand down from his great sire, Sir Charles, the grandest horse and best goer that Yorkshire had then produced. We got out of our trap and walked over to the hedge, where we stood looking at her, spellbound, for we recognised that we were in the presence of the finest Hackney mare we had ever seen. She looked sixteen hands high, so majestic was her bearing, although as a matter of fact her height was only fifteen hands and a quarter of an inch. She was a long, low mare to the ground, with a back as level as a billiard table and her tail set right on the end of it, with no sign of a droop in her quarters. And when she walked away from us up went her tail as if it had been set up. She stood on a set of legs made of whipcord and steel, every thew and sinew standing out clean and distinct, and her feet were of ivory, so dense and close was the texture. If you had put a hood over her neck you would have said her back was too long, but she was wonderfully ribbed up, and her last rib was, I think, the deepest I ever saw on a horse of anything like her size. When set alight her action was perfect. She lived in the air and

only came down to the earth to kiss it. As old S——, the vet, who bred Gentleman John, used to say, she could go as high as wild geese can fly. The first thing that struck me when I saw Ophelia for the first time was the beautiful balance of her lines and proportions, and I took off my hat to her as my mistress instructor in the balance of a horse.

In 1912 I stayed with the late Tom Smith, the owner of her grandson, Admiral Crichton,[1] and we drove over in the morning with the late William Foster to Frank Batchelor's place for his dispersal sale. There I saw Ophelia for the last time. She was out in the meadow, and the moment we rattled our hats up went her head and tail, and she trotted away with the same fascinating force and elegance as when I had first seen her as a three-year-old, a quarter of a century before."

I should like to read the man who could write like this of a steam-engine or a motor-bus. It takes a horseman to recognise twelve hundred pounds running loose in a field, to get that sum or to give it. I, who know nothing about cars, will undertake to give twelve hundred to-morrow morning and bring home some thousand pounds' worth at the worst. But your dapper little gentleman shall put twelve hundred pounds in his pocket and buy a horse running in a field, and he will be lucky indeed if he do not have to take fifty the next time Crewe sales come round.

[1] This, and not Admirable Crichton, was actually the horse's name.

Your motorist may say that I have only to go to the right shop. Well, I will take him to the right field. . . .

Old S—— was the finest horseman of my time. In appearance he was a composition of Coquelin and Lord Lonsdale. He had the comedian's "titled sensitive nose, which seemed to flick like a terrier's." His irascibility was well known all over the East Riding, whilst even his geniality had some quality of terror. He wore a roundish bowler hat of the type you can see in the back numbers of *Punch*, and brown cloth gaiters. Between them his covering seemed to consist solely of a stone-coloured Melton overcoat. This had eight buttons in mother-of-pearl, the size of half-crowns, and made still gayer by representations of steeple-chasing, tandem-driving, coaching, the death of Reynard, duck-shooting, coursing, the Hackney mare Bounce, and her son, Gentleman John. There was about old S—— something of the horse-dealer in the print *Messrs Screwdriver and Reardone's Opinions concerning "The Prize," own brother to "Lottery," on the first of May 1841*, a copy of which and its fellow hung in his front parlour. You know the old picture—the yard, the dealer all geniality, the customer all simpleness, the ostler who might have stood for a model of Fagin, the tight old groom cleaning a bridle, the rude little boy pulling bacon, the screw himself, ears well back, tail set up, every inch a rogue. Underneath, the legend: "There's a hoss, Mr Green. Only

feel them legs, sir. Six years old, never did a day's work in his life, up to twenty stone, thoroughbred as Eclipse, and can gallop like a pony. I gave two hundred for him at Rugely last week, and old Andrews wished he might be damned if he warn't the cheapest nag in the fair. He offered me twenty pound for the buying on him, to carry a werry good customer of his'n, the Hemperor of Russia, a heavy man, but I know'd he'd suit you, Mr Green, so I didn't mind throwing the Hemperor over—specially as he warn't no customer of mine. If you gives me two hundred and fifty and takes and rides him as I knows you *will* ride him, I'll pound it the Herl of P—— sends you a cheque for Five hundred pounds for him the first day the Queen goes down into the grass below Harrow."

And then the fellow-print: *Messrs Screwdriver and Reardone's Opinions concerning "The Prize," own brother to "Lottery," the property of James Green, Esquire, on the* 1st *October 1841.* The figures are the same, the situation alone is altered. "So he is, Mr Green, a useful animal, very. But lord, sir, only just look in my stables, full as ever they can hold. I haven't sold a hoss these two months. . . . However, Mr Green, to oblige you I'll take him at harness price—thirty pounds—*if you'll warrant him*—he's worth a deal more I dessay, but at this time of year I'd rather not have him at all, 'pon my life, I wouldn't. Mind, Mr Green, I said pounds, not guineas."

None was safe from the lash of old S——'s irony. It is recorded of him that in a deal with one of his cronies he swopped a cottage piano for a brood mare. But when the mare arrived she turned out to be not the agreed animal but a substitute, poor, stale as a bone, herring-gutted. Whereupon old S—— took the works out of his piano and dispatched the empty case. The parties remained the best of friends; those were not the days of weak-kneed lawsuits. It was a case of pull devil, pull baker, and victory to the stronger.

Some little time afterwards the substituter of the mare bought from old S—— a harness gelding which, on arrival, turned out to be an aged stud-horse. To the laconic telegram: "Your gelding is a stallion," S—— replied: "I know, and so was his father before him." Both stories are apocryphal, and in any case the feud was an avowed and friendly one. In his dealings with the outer world the old gentleman was a model of what a horseman should be. He would not pull out an animal on Sunday or Good Friday or Christmas Day for the best customer breathing, though on weekdays he worked himself and his family from four in the morning till four the next. Like a good horseman he never really slept.

Perhaps the best animal S—— ever owned was Bounce. She was bought as a two-year-old for one hundred and twenty pounds from George Wakefield, farmer and horse-breeder of Messingham, Lincs, turned away and brought up again

as a three-year-old to be broken to harness. And then, as the old gentleman used to say: "Nobody could mak' nowt on her. She wouldn't hev it. She broke all her harness, and the only man as ever tried to get on her that day never tried again." So into the char-à-banc she had to go, a char-à-banc in those times being a "numb" thing, in the pin of which a refractory animal could hurt neither itself, its neighbours nor its driver. Bounce was put into the pin between the other two horses, and driven with a load of excursionists from Hull to Bridlington, a distance of thirty-four miles, and back again. At Driffield, on the return journey, or fifteen miles from home, the driver reported that she "gave in." For the last few miles it was only the two poles that held the mare up, and on being taken out she collapsed. During the whole of that day she had refused food, and now took an oatmeal drench with as ill-grace as any hunger-striker. Next morning her legs were like millposts, and generally she was very sorry for herself. This was the mood old S—— was waiting for. He put a saddle and bridle on her and she carried him quietly. The same night he drove the mare in single harness on his round, and for several weeks afterwards she did her eight or ten hours on the road. She was no "hollow-pampered jade of Asia which cannot go but thirty miles a day." Next she was sold to B——, a London dealer, for two hundred guineas, and presently going through a shop window in Piccadilly was again for sale.

B—— wrote to S——, who immediately went up to London, ostensibly a country customer for the animal, actually to see the amount of damage done. This turned out to be small. In an interview with the young swell S—— said that, to look at, she seemed a "nicesh" mare, and a "good sort." He asked whether this had happened before, how long she had been in her present ownership, whether she had ever been ridden, who bred her, the usual mystifications of the dealer buying back his own. Finally, if his lordship, who was asking two hundred guineas, cared to send the mare on at twenty-seven pounds —not guineas—*and would warrant her*, his lordship could do so. His lordship did.

On her return to Hull she did all S——'s veterinary rounds, together with the work of the fire-brigade, the prison-van and the job-yard. She was exhibited at shows all over the country-side, and on her last public appearance carried off the championship at the Great Lincolnshire. Retired to the stud she bred seventeen foals, fourteen colts and three fillies. Her most famous son was Gentleman John, perhaps the most beautiful Hackney stallion which ever set foot in a show-yard. With an injection of two grains of strychnine and corded he was also one of the finest movers ever seen ; but as both these means of showing a horse are illegitimate, it were perhaps more honest to judge him standing. Even then he was worth every penny of the four thousand pounds he fetched in his prime. The

last time he was sold was at Crewe for, if I remember rightly, fourteen guineas. It is pleasant to think that this sum was given to save the old horse from that last dread traffic which ends in Belgium.

"Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse" is to put the friend of man on a lowish level. Old S—— used to tell a yarn of a country squire whose wife lay ill in bed with pneumonia. Finding his favourite hunter shaking in his box he rushed indoors, tore the blankets from his wife's bed and put them on his dearer prize. Your horse is a great provoker of sincerity.

On his death-bed S—— called his sons round him.

"My feyther left me nowt," he said, "and A'm leaving yo nowt. A'm leaving all my brass i' trust for my grandchilder."

"That's no matter, Dad," replied the eldest-born. "You've left us the wide world to roam in."

"An' I reckon it'll be wide enough to hold ye," the old man retorted. And so saying, died. When his private papers were gone through they were found to consist of the most ordinary business memoranda. His had been a life entirely without secrets. One envelope alone was sealed. It bore the following inscription :— "Prescription for Worm Pouders to be opened after my death to the one that follows the business to be kept secret."

A visit to the old farm which has now changed

hands is not without melancholy. Some little time ago young S—— took me over and proudly showed me the stone boxes with their tenants' names over the door and their effigies carved on the lintel. Here is Bounce's box, next to hers is Gentleman John's, here Tip-top's, Topper's, Merlin's. Let into the wall at the entrance to the yard is a tablet in white stone, marking the spot where the mare lies buried. It bears the following inscription :—

IN MEMORY OF THE HACKNEY MARE,
Bounce, H.S.B. No. 36

A mare they called Bounce in this grave lies at rest,
She's left stock behind her of the very best.
She was over fifteen hands high and her colour dark brown,
A brood mare or in harness in the show-ring well known.
Her last record in the show-ring to end her show career
When she was fourteen years of age she won the great Lincolnshire.
And she was plucky to the last with her action fresh and free,
The time she reigned upon this earth was thirty years and three.

GENTLEMAN JOHN
Winner of the
Challenge Cup
in America
Outright. 1904.
Against all
Nations judged
by Americans.

The poet is one Northard of Reedness, Goole. I know of no other works of his.

Let me recount one other Yorkshire history, that of Taylor's Performer, from whom the great Ophelia and all our modern harness horses are descended. In the year 1840 James Taylor, of Pocklington, a poor groom, borrowed from his master the sum of nineteen pounds, wherewith to purchase a chestnut roadster colt foal which had taken his fancy. Too poor to keep the foal, he agreed with some horse-dealers of Givendale to sell them a half-share in it, in return for which they promised to keep it until the age of three years. When in three years' time the poor groom claimed his half of the horse the dealers denied the bargain, and, swearing that Taylor was only their servant, refused to give up the horse or any share of the money he had earned. They then shut the animal up in a barn, which they secured with lock and key. Advised by his lawyer that he must not break a lock, the groom went at dead of night with a friendly brick-layer and removed the window-casement at the back of the barn. Making a slope of litter, he led out the horse which, to the barn-breaker's horror, promptly emitted a loud neigh. Fortunately the dealers slept on both ears that night, and Taylor got his horse away. After travelling as far as Leicester, he boldly took the animal back to Givendale, was arrested for theft, tried and acquitted. The horse was put up to auction and knocked down to Taylor at one hundred and fifty guineas, which was advanced by the kindly master who had supported him all along. Afterwards known as

Taylor's Performer, the horse became the sire of Sir Charles, who begat Denmark, who begat Danegelt. In 1884 was foaled Ophelia, the daughter of Denmark or Danegelt—it will never be known which.

When, many years afterwards, the late Frank Batchelor broke up his stud, this grand old mare alone was retained to end her days in peace. There, amid the cheerful noises of the farm, in "pastoral fields burned by the setting sun," she was to live out the remainder of her days. Is it outside poetic fancy to imagine that, like any human, "with each slow step" and perhaps nibbling here and there a mouthful, she did "curiously inspect our lasting home"? When she was brought out and paraded for the last time, all the bidders and those who had not a brass farthing—grooms, strappers, horse-copers, the indescribable rag tag and bobtail that gather round a sale ring—rose as one man. Rascals who would curse their mothers stood up in their places, removed the straws from their mouths and respectfully took off their hats. Ophelia's offspring were Lord Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Polonius, Fortinbras—afterwards and less happily re-named Heathfield Squire, the only horse which ever beat the great Forest King—Royal Ophelian, Miss Terry—in compliment to the actress who had just charmed England with her Ophelia—and Ophelia's Daughter Grace. And here the Shakespearean style and title ends, and the names of the remaining children, including

the great son Mathias, are not to my purpose. I shudder to record that to a horse with a double cross of the Ophelia blood has been given the name *Ophelius*, a horrid invention to be brought to the notice of some Academy of Equine Taste. It sometimes happens that horses born to studs in unlikely places have to be re-named before being sent into the show-ring. It would never do to saddle a show-horse with a name of plebeian origin. Just as the Misses Lizzie Sinclair and Susie Miggs, of 999b Petticoat Lane, will appear on the West End stage as the elegant and dashing Mesdames Elise St Clair and Suzanne de Volte-Face, so will those homely nags, Bermondsey Bill and Whitechapel Walter, suffer a Richmond-and-Olympia change to the princes Florizel of Mayfair and Charming of Piccadilly. But they will be their mothers' sons for all that. The champion harness-horse of this present year is called Dark Legend—a beautiful name; but then he comes from beautiful Camilla Lacey. The house that Fanny Burney built is now the headquarters of one of the finest Hackney studs in the country. To what different uses men and things may come!

I love the harness horse. I love the way in which, emergent from his rugs in treasured splendour, he is sent into the arena. There the artistry of preparation and the rascality of preparers come to fruition. Your true showman is immune from misadventure save that which may befall his horse, proof against sorrow, impervious

to natural shock. Wife, child—they should have died hereafter.

Your true horseman would rather drive over Yorkshire moors to mend a pair of damaged forelegs than pass in review the ancient statuary of Greece. On the last of such excursions young S—— it was who drove me in a heavy pig-cart, with a Hackney mare twenty-four years old between the shafts, over some four miles of rough up-hill track in less than twenty-four minutes. She had that morning taken a load to Beverley, a distance there and back of eighteen miles, and looked as fit as a fiddle and fresh as a daisy. Her sire was Gentleman John and her dam a mare by Danegelt, who was by Denmark, by Sir Charles, again by Taylor's Performer, the horse belonging to our poor Yorkshire groom.

I love these Yorkshire moors; every blade of grass prates of the horse's whereabout. In all fiction the landscape which has most, even though vaguely, remained with me is the park-land through which Meredith takes Diana and Lady ——[1] for a drive on a wettish day with a sou'wester blowing. But the country badly needs a horse besides that or those in the carriage, and I would give all the brilliant chatter for a picture of some Ophelia over the hedge, trotting away

[1] There are borrower's gaps in my shelves. Seven times have I sent to the local library for the lady's name, but on each occasion *Diana* has been out. It would appear that unfashionable interest in this author is not on the wane. Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

from you, wearing two good ends and using hocks and stifles.

I have known some eventful days in my life. There was the day when my first dramatic criticism was printed, when my first book appeared, when I put on uniform and again when I put it off. There was the day when I first beheld in the flesh the Editor of *The Saturday Review*, and two days on which I was to realise that Stevenson drew a longish bow when he said: "A writer can live by his writing; if not so luxuriously as by other trades, then less luxuriously."[1] I count such illumination happiness.

[1] A well-known writer has warned budding authors that it is of no use writing masterpieces unless you are prepared to stand out for their full market value. As a very young man I had an experience which may serve as an awful warning to other very young men with a belief in the commercial generosity of the world in general, and newspaper proprietors in particular. In January 1906 I sent a letter on some theatrical subject to the editor of a North of England halfpenny paper, of great wealth, influence and circulation. This was inserted. Some time afterwards an arrangement was concluded whereby I was to undertake the dramatic criticism of the paper for one year. This being my first literary venture, I was naturally modest as to its value and ignorant also of the rates paid by newspapers for such copy. To be perfectly candid, I was anxious to try my hand at a year's 'prentice work, quite content if I received the lowest scale of remuneration paid to the worst kind of reporting. In my *naïveté* I proposed to leave it to the editor of the paper to pay me at Christmas whatever sum he should then consider the articles to have been worth. To this he agreed.

During that year I went to the theatre some forty-nine times and contributed some forty-nine articles from a third to three-quarters of a column in length. As I found that whenever I made reference to Sarah Bernhardt the paper next morning printed Sarah Dewhurst, I made a practice of staying in the office until two, three, or even four o'clock in the morning to correct my proofs. When Christmas Eve came I received a letter from the editor enclosing a cheque for *seven guineas*, which amount he said he had increased from the five originally contemplated, "owing to the superior quality of the work." Now I maintain that either (*a*) the proprietors of the journal still owe me a considerable sum or (*b*) that they were guilty of extraordinary discourtesy and unfairness both to their readers and to the theatrical profession in publishing dramatic

But none of these days, how glorious soever in eventfulness or illumination, is comparable in rapture with that on which my little David—*First Edition* was his Stud Book name—pitted himself against great Goliath—the fifteen-two *Haddon Marphil*—and beat that giant for the championship of a great North of England show. Round and round the enormous track they went, the big horse collected, within himself, going great guns, the pony beating him for pace, outshining majesty with fussy self-importance. So you may compare the ocean-going liner with the steam-tug breasting the Thames, and breaking up that placid bosom into impertinent ruffles. So did *First Edition* break up the show-ring into foam and spume, a flurry of white socks. When the little fellow had gone ten laps to the big horse's nine, the judge went with the crowd and

criticism which they were honourably convinced was not of greater value. The dilemma is perfect. It was on the strength of these articles that I received and accepted an invitation to join the critical staff of *The Manchester Guardian*.

On the day some fourteen years later on which I took the MS. of *Responsibility* to my publisher I treated myself to luncheon at a famous restaurant. I had never taken any interest in the huckstering side of literature, and was uncertain therefore as to the amount which might be demanded on account of royalties. Seeking a line through honest industry, I asked one of the less tremendous doorkeepers of the famous eating-house what his earnings were. "Four pounds a week, sir, reg'lar." Now the book had taken two years' hard work, which, at a doorkeeper's rate, amounts to some four hundred pounds. Modestly I determined to ask two, but my interview ultimately resulted in a meagre cheque for fifty. "You see, my dear fellow," said my publisher with his most charming smile, "the *chasseur* fulfils a useful function." The bill for typing came to £21, 15s., author's corrections £25, agent's fee £2, 10s., leaving me a net profit of fifteen shillings, on which I submit that existence for two years would need to be of the "less luxurious" order. I understand that the royalties actually earned fell short of the amount generously advanced.

gave him best. He stood thirteen and a half hands high, had a leg at each corner and a heart of gold. In his box children could play with him; in his leather he was a ball of fury. There was nothing royal about him; he was not even a patrician. He was a commoner, a Povey with a dash of Denry, and he had the dæmonic energy of Denry's creator. He went better at the fortieth tour of the ring than at the first, although when he had gone half-a-dozen times round he would edge towards the judges in the centre, so accustomed was he to be the first to be called in. When the war broke out I sold him to a butcher to hearten the streets of some manufacturing town. What has since become of him I know not. Would I were with him wheresoe'er he is!

The Art of the Guitrys

IN the spring of 1920 a number of the plays of the younger Guitry were produced in London with the assistance of M. Guitry the elder. The success of *Nono* is very far removed from that dismal thing, the success of scandal; it is an intimate and vivacious account of the sentimental adventures of a couple of *michés* and their *gigolo*—to borrow the classicisms of the Place Blanche. "To distrust one's impulses is to be recreant to Pan," wrote the most moral of literary fauns, surely a direct encouragement to the timid to enjoy any play which moves frankly and amusingly just below the recognised surface, on the fringe of the just not fashionable half-world. It encourages the shy to find that young simpleton natural who hesitates between the return of his mistress and the return of four thousand francs, to laugh at the witty compoundings of the worldly buffoon who has stolen both; and to find also that little lady not recreant to Pan, who, when invited to choose between her lovers, calmly replies: "*Ça m'est égal!*" To have a lover at all costs, just not to be "landed," is the reasonable philosophy of her world.

Plump into his cauldron of bubbling wit M. Guitry drops an ice-cold morsel of intellectual honesty, his little lady's matter-of-fact acceptance of her destiny. "*Ma mère en était, ma sœur en est, moi j'en suis, que voulez-vous?*" She is as her mother was, and her sister is. What would you? Mademoiselle Yvonne

Printemps played Nono very well indeed. Her manners, gestures, intonation, accent were all adorably *canaille*; she hit off the required commonness to a nicety. M. Sacha Guitry's middle-aged lover was clever enough to be just faintly disagreeable. The playwright has created a pair of vicious, vacuous babies, in neither of whom does there seem justification for quite the venom which he, as an actor, instilled into the one he played. M. Hieronimus hardly began to act at all. He seemed to me to bring to his playing exactly the same personality and tricks of manner which he used as the boy in *Le Vieux Marcheur*. Mademoiselle Suzanne Avril showed a delightful sense of comedy; but the finest piece of acting of all was the waiter of M. Gildès. This was valetry as it should be played, a piece of ripe, grave, ineffable fooling that would have warmed the heart of Molière.

In one of Balzac's novels there is an old government employee who, on the eve of his retirement, petitions his old enemy, the departmental wag. "Ecoutez, Monsieur Bixiou, je n'ai plus que cinq jours et demi à rester dans les bureaux, et je voudrais une fois, une seule fois, avoir le plaisir de vous comprendre!" The plain Englishman is almost as much mystified by M. Sacha Guitry. "How is it possible," he asks, "for the a-moralities of *La Prise de Berg-op-Zoom* to become the spiritualities of *Pasteur*? The truth is that there has been no change.

Both qualities have always existed side by side in M. Guitry. For here we come upon a fundamental truth about French character, in regard to which they are *mystificateurs*, and the English so many functionaries in the dark. The fundamental quality of our neighbours is their essential gravity. Sterne was right when he said that if the French have a fault, it is that they are too serious. Every Englishman wants, *au fond*, to be taken seriously, to be considered a responsible being with a vote. Mr Chesterton would be staggered if you were to read his paradoxes literally, and fail to detect in logic on her head the symbol of eternal truth. Almost, I am convinced, would Mr Galsworthy sacrifice the theatre for the Bench, with its scope for leniency, and Mr Beerbohm his wit and pencil-hand for the earnestness of the author of *Justice*. Now the ruling passion of the Frenchman is to be taken for a clown. His genius for fooling has been canonised as *l'esprit gaulois*. He is the master and the child of wit, only it is often a child very near to crying. Remember Beaumarchais. M. Guitry is devastatingly witty on the subject of light love just because, in his country, marriage is such an essentially serious affair.

I do not care very greatly for the acting of M. Sacha Guitry. His creations, when he plays them himself, strike me as Faustian, too full of elder knowledge, apt to see evil and to choose it. "The great art of Congreve is especially shown in this, that he has entirely excluded from his

scenes not only anything like a faultless character, but any pretensions to goodness or good feelings whatsoever." But M. Guitry the playwright is, at heart, full of goodness and good feelings. He draws morals. These may be only a shrug of the shoulders, but in a Frenchman's shrug a world of criticism is implied. His acting it is which is a-moral. It is not genial. That which in the plays is froth in the acting becomes dregs. There is something about the over-long sleeves, the enormous tie, the too facile smile which is irresistibly reminiscent of a comedian of a very different order—the late Mark Sheridan. Wit which should be as beaded bubbles has become a low and evil jocosity. It is sinister, even *louche*.

Pasteur, the fine flower, has grown out of the same soil as these earlier and venomous blossoms. The later writer is still never jovial, never riotous, has no tinge of the buffoon; his weapon is the rapier and not the bludgeon; we are to surrender ourselves to witty thumps on the head, not on the back. Landor says that true wit requires the grave mind and reminds us that Rabelais and La Fontaine were dreamers. "Few men have been graver than Pascal. Few men have been wittier. There is more seriousness in M. Guitry than his wittiest plays might lead us to suppose, although it would have taken a very Bunthorne to find more innocent fun in *Pasteur* than a casual spectator might imagine.

It has been said that this is not really a play. Its five acts break every canon. There is no action, no development of character. Yet these acts are charged with a rare and high emotion. The play is, as any play ought to be, a trifle too big for the spectator. It gives scope to a character so monumental that the audience can't quite grasp the whole of him. We want to turn him round, to see the other side, to think him over. Yet what does it all amount to! A scene or two of defiant scorn, of old age in tender contemplation of youth, of the approach of winter angering an untiring and unyielding brain. And that is all. M. Lucien Guitry's acting of Pasteur is in the grand tradition. I do not mean that it is of the robustious order. Never, indeed, was acting more completely "natural." But it is a performance to compel the admiration of all actors of all times, nationalities and schools. Johnson would have found some sonority to fit it; Mr Walkley was sobered by it into English. And yet it is, exteriorly, nothing more than a portrait of a dictatorial and rather boorish professor, with a snuff-coloured beard and sagging belly. With him you range the very topmost peaks of human grandeur. Stevenson says of a novel by Dumas that nowhere is the end of life presented with so fine a tact. But then he had not seen Lucien Guitry grow old. As the actor's body dwindles the spirit increases; as the tenant-soul prepares for flight the house falls in. It is pitiful and glorious. Like that greatest

play of Ibsen about the defaulting stockbroker in a garret, there is nothing for the eye here. Will, that superb *volonté* which is never for very long out of a Frenchman's mouth, is stamped in every line of the brow, every fine, defiant gesture, every burning word, and even in every silence. It is the will of Balzac in his last rebellion against death, of our own Stevenson in his passionate cherishing of his shortened span of life. It is, above all, the will to do right. There is something of God in it. No praise can be too high for the grandeur of conception, the physical energy and speed of the earlier acts, the bodily slowing down, the clarity of mind unimpaired at the end.

A View of The Beggar's Opera

You should go to Hammersmith, Child, to learn Valour.
GAY (*Adapted*).

HANG the age! I will write for antiquity!'' cried a fastidious spirit. "Hang the age!" Mr Nigel Playfair exclaims, "I will revive for the past!" and so saying pulls out the old *Beggar's Opera* and enlists a popular author to help in the text revisions. The opera is an enchanting affair, a perfect combination of "those two good things, sense and sound." Spontini, Cherubini, Bellini, Rossini, Puccini—the whole "ini" family have done nothing more fragrant than this bouquet of homely melodies. Of the first author and producer of this play it is possible to be handsomely ignorant.

"Of Doctor Pepusch old Queen Dido
Knew just as much, God knows, as I do."

Since four hours is too much of a good thing for modern audiences and taste has degenerated, let me, poetising in turn, imagine Mr Playfair in soliloquy, confronted with these two-fold difficulties of space-time and century-taste.

"If cut I must this be my tenet,
The cutter shall be Arnold Bennett,
And Pepusch' spirit won't be lost in
Sympathetic Frederick Austin;
Whilst how to act the tribe of Peachum
It's up to Nigel P. to teach 'em."

A curious adventure to find the perfect entertainment in this modest Hammersmith playhouse.

You leave the unfashionable street to mix with a crowd of shiny-faced enthusiasts who have not thought it necessary to bare their backs and tire their heads in order to hear better. And what a world of romance greets you on the stage, the world of the High-toby-crack and the Ordinary, the bridle-cull, the clay-faker, the buttock-and-file! A world of scoundrels undismayed, of rogues with a sense of style, doxies and wives, soon to be hempen widows, gazing tearless upon the heroic turning-off. Polly was of gentler mould. The picture she makes of her lover going to the gallows is of the most touching simplicity. "I see him sweeter than the nosegay in his hand; the admiring crowd lament that so lovely a youth should come to an untimely end; even butchers weep, and Jack Ketch refuses his fee rather than consent to tie the fatal knot." All, it would appear, were exquisites who came to this tree. "He was but sixteen," says the biographer of Roderick Audrey. "He went very decent to the gallows, being in a white waistcoat, clean napkin, white gloves, and an orange in his hand."

The Beggar's Opera was Hazlitt's favourite satire. Plentiful references to it abound throughout the essays, which contain two full-dress descriptions of the plot, and the lessons in morality to be drawn therefrom. In both Hazlitt stresses the vulgar error which would call this a vulgar play, and harks back to that "happy alchemy of mind" which can extract the essence of

refinement from the dregs of life. He is full of the "justice to nature." It is because America has no history that she has never been able to appreciate the play. "And in America—that Van Diemen's Land of letters — this sterling satire is hooted off the stage, because, fortunately, they have no such state of manners as it describes before their eyes; and because, unfortunately, they have no conception of anything but what they see. America is singularly and awkwardly situated in this respect. It is a new country with an old language; and while everything about them is of a day's growth, they are constantly applying to us to know what to think of it, and taking their opinions from our books and newspapers with a strange mixture of servility and of the spirit of contradiction."

This was written in 1827 and it is curious that when, in 1921, in consequence of the tremendous success of the revival over here, the play was once more tried in America, it was again a dismal failure. The Yankees appear to have made up their minds on both occasions without applying to our books and newspapers to know what to think.

The vicissitudes which *The Beggar's Opera* has undergone in its own country should explain the lack of appreciation abroad. Already, in 1828, we find the essayist deploring the degeneracy of the age. "It is not that there are not plenty of rogues and pickpockets at present; but the Muse is averse to look that way; the imagination has

taken a higher flight; wit and humour do not flow in that dirty channel, picking the grains of gold out of it. Instead of descending, we aspire; and the age has a sublime front given to it to contemplate the heaven of drawing-rooms and the milky-way of passion." Even the players had begun to forsake truth for gentility. The Lucy of that year "put a negative on an encore that was likely to detain her five minutes longer in Newgate." Polly "was frightened at the interest she might inspire and was loth to waste her sweetness on a blackguard air." How then shall we account for the enormous success of the present revival in an age of fashionable comedy raised to the seventh heaven of inanity? Shall I submit a revulsion from those drawing-room games of Blind Man's Buff or the King's Proctor Hoodwinked, Hunt the Slipper, or The Maid's Shift?[1] Shall I say that these days of terrorism and unwritten laws are a sign that we are no longer degenerate, but reborn? I am afraid that neither plea will hold. The success of *The Beggar's Opera* is, alas! not more than a success of antiquity; it pleases like a chair of some good period which it is delightful to gaze upon and to handle, but which one would not dream of using. The satire of the past has lost its sting.

And this brings me to a very nice point. What, exactly, do we expect in a performance of *The Beggar's Opera*? Let me pay all possible

[1] See *A Social Convenience*, *The Fulfilling of the Law*, and *Up in Mabel's Room*.

tribute to a production of charm, taste and wit. The artists act well enough, and sing tunably; the stage-pictures are a delight to the eye, the ground-swell of the musicians is a solace to the ear. All that can humanly be asked is performed, and yet the thing is not the Beggar's Opera of our dreams. This is a matter worthy of some discussion, since the whole function of the theatre is here called in question. Can life be put upon the stage at all? Was that slice of life which is *The Beggar's Opera* ever played to any perfection save in the spectator's brain? And is not something more demanded from the spectator than mere corroboration, an essential eking out of the all too insufficient actor's art? It is the case of the blackamoor in a temper all over again. The quintessence of the Moor is not to be acted. Read *Othello* and the map of a noble character is spread before you like some fair country, of which jealousy is an accidental scarp. But in the theatre the spectator's nose is to the quarry-face; he too is blinded by a single passion. In the theatre you are allowed to take nothing for granted; the sawing of the lip, the frenzied rolling of the eye are "effects" to be brought off to satisfy the dullards. So, too, Falstaff's paunch may never be taken for granted. The actor must, at all costs, inflict upon you the well-oiled machinery of ventripotence, whereas, to the reader, it is his mind which drips fatness. Who will say that that stoutish, middle-aged, bald-headed figure in the limelight, clad though

he be in brown surtout and imposing shirt-collar, with a roll in the voice and indescribable, genteel air, is really Micawber as we know him who have lived with him? These, the externals of the man which the reader takes for granted, are on the stage stressed beyond endurance, lest, peradventure, we mistake the fellow for Ally Sloper. Peachum and Macheath are alike unactable. They shall be pictures to fright and to please the eye of childhood, villainy lined roughly and gallantry daubed after the fashion of a Christmas Number. The fault is not in the actors but in their art which, of itself, can go only such a little way towards creation. In the theatre the brain of a spectator must prove the female to the actor's ; in no other way can life be begot. The poorest printed page is, by itself, nearer creation than the actor's unaided flesh and blood.

Apply this to the work before us. *The Beggar's Opera* was written some twenty years before *Jonathan Wild*, but it is from Fielding that these immortal rogues look out upon their time and upon us. Where Gay writes Peachum, Lockit and Polly we must read Jonathan, Blueskin and Laetitia Snap. Listen once again to Fielding's description of Miss Tishy : "Her lovely hair hung wantonly over her forehead, being neither white with, nor yet free from, powder ; a neat double clout, which seemed to have been worn a few weeks only, was pinned under her chin ; some remains of that art with which ladies improve nature, shone upon her cheeks ; her body

was loosely attired, without stays or jumps; so that her breasts had uncontrolled liberty to display their beauteous orbs, which they did as low as her girdle; a thin covering of a rumpled muslin handkerchief almost hid them from our eyes, save in a few parts where a good-natured hole gave opportunity to the naked breast to appear. Her gown was a satin of a whitish colour, with about a dozen little silver spots on it, so artificially interwoven at great distance, that they looked as if they had fallen there by chance. This, flying open, discovered a fine yellow petticoat, beautifully edged round the bottom with a narrow piece of half-gold lace, which was now almost become fringe; beneath this appeared another petticoat stiffened with whalebone, vulgarly called a hoop, which hung six inches at least below the other; and under this again appeared an under garment of that colour which Ovid intends when he says,

'Qui color albus erat nunc est contrarius albo.'

She likewise displayed two pretty feet, covered with silk and adorned with lace, and tied, the right with a handsome piece of blue riband; the left, as more unworthy, with a piece of yellow stuff which seemed to have been a strip of her upper-petticoat."

Who, with this picture in his mind, can quite have reconciled himself to the ladies at the Lyric, those immaculate and silver fountains? And then there is the difficulty of Polly, who was

played as though she were Patience. Alas! that we cannot know from observation how Miss Stephens or Miss Nash used to play the part. We read: "The acting of Miss Stephens throughout was simple, unaffected and graceful and full of tenderness. There is a severity of feeling and a plaintive sadness, both in the words and music of the songs in this opera, on which too much stress cannot be laid." Neither Miss Nelis nor Miss Arkandy had tenderness; they were neither plaintive nor sad, nor unaffected. They took refuge from anything resembling severity of feeling in the highly artificial, conscious artlessness of Gilbert's milkmaid. They were china figures, and delectable, but unreal. Peachum erred on the side of gentility. He should be "an old rogue." So is not Mr Frederick Austin. He should have looked like "Phiz's" illustrations, his face all bubukles and whelks and flames of fire. Whereas there was something *moral* about Mr Austin, something of Matthew Arnold in's aspect, a dash of the disconcerting debonair, a hint of Escamillo. You could not imagine him cutting up lives and booty. The Mrs Peachum of Miss Elsie French was excellent in intention, but a trifle lacking in gusto. Not the cleverest actress can, by taking thought, add *richness* to her personality, and I do not think it lay in Miss French's physical powers to play the part other than as she did. Nevertheless, Mrs Peachum was too shrill and shrewish, too much the harridan, the secret, black and midnight hag.

Chambering and strong waters called for a more generous habit; she did not warm to her villainies. Where there should have been the rump-fed ronyon there was the ghoul. The Lucy of Miss Violet Marquisita was an admirable spitfire, and Lockit most excellently cut out in cardboard. His hypocrisy had just the proper touch.

"'Tis thus the crocodile his grief displays,
Sheds the false tear, and, whilst he weeps, betrays."

The scuffle between Peachum and Lockit was well done and we should not have been surprised to hear an old gentleman in the pit shout, as on an earlier occasion: "Hogarth, by God!" But the performance, as any performance of this opera must, stands or falls by Macheath. Upon this part Hazlitt expends all the wealth of his discernment. Macheath, he says, is not a gentleman but a "fine gentleman." His manners should resemble those of this kidney as closely as the dresses of the ladies in the private boxes resemble those of the ladies in the boxes which are not private. He is to be one of God Almighty's gentlemen, not a gentleman of the black rod. "His gallantry and good breeding should arise from impulse, not from rule; not from the trammels of education, but from a soul generous, courageous, good-natured, aspiring, amorous. The class of the character is very difficult to hit. It is something between gusto and slang, like

port wine and brandy mixed. It is not the mere gentleman that should be represented but the blackguard sublimated into the gentleman." Hazlitt could find no one on the stage of his day to play the part as he conceived it. The elder Kemble might have done, but he was no singer. Mr Kean might have made the experiment, but he would not have succeeded. Incledon was not sufficient of a gentleman, Davies did not sing well enough, Sinclair was too finical, Cooke without title for the part.

Mr Frederick Ranalow, then, had in Macheath a sufficiently challenging part from the point of view of tradition. We may say at once that he was good-looking, gallant, debonair, vocal. Perhaps he was a trifle over-wigged, which makes Macheath something less than the "pretty fellow" of Madame Vestris. Whilst his gentility was exactly right—and we can imagine the page of purple our essayist would have given to the nicety of his hitting-off—we did not quite believe in his scoundrelism. He was the sentimental philanderer of our own day, and not the trusser of women. This small discrepancy apart, Mr Ranalow was admirable. No praise could have been too high for the perfection of his diction, the wit of his *Before the Barn-Door Crowing*, the pathos of *The Charge is Prepared*, the finesse of *How Happy could I be with Either*. He is a most accomplished singer, and an actor to his finger-tips. Still, the only part in the present production which I take to be entirely in accord-

ance with the old spirit is Filch. Filch is a serious, contemplative, *conscientious* character. He is to sing *'Tis Woman that seduces all Mankind*, as if he had a pretty girl in one eye and the gallows in the other. The actor is not to make a joke of the part. By being sober, honest and industrious he hopes to escape Tyburn by way of Transportation. The Filch of Mr Frederick Davies was exactly in this key. His gesture at the words "Pox take the Tailors for making the Fobs so deep and narrow" was the one *canaillerie* in the play. Here we come again at our point. The characters in the Opera are to have but a superficial air of gallantry and romance; there should be something hang-dog about them. All the gallants in the revival could ogle a wench; not one of them save Filch had the gallows in his composition. The shadow of the gibbet was not here; you would have unhesitatingly invited them to sup at your own house. Even the women of the town were, you feel, only pretending. An old French critic singled out among the many excellencies of the comedy, "the differentiation the author makes between the jades, how each has her separate character, her peculiar traits, her peculiar modes of expression, which give her a marked distinction from her companions." Whereas each of the hussies personified at the Lyric was qualified to mate with an earl. There was nothing of a distinguishing tawdriness about them except their styles and titles.

Gay seems to have glossed over the real nature of the intrigue. It was, doubtless, always a delicate thing to suggest to English ears, even in the eighteenth century, that Peachum *père et mère* have a vested interest in Polly's wantonness, and a legitimate grievance in her revolt in favour of a single lover. "Look ye, Wife," says Peachum, "a handsome Wench in our way of Business is as profitable as at the Bar of a Temple Coffee-House, who looks upon it as her livelihood to grant every Liberty but one." Fielding was less squeamish, and so too are our neighbours. Compare that moral tract of Villiers de l'Isle Adam, *Les Demoiselles de Bienfilâtre*, written some forty years ago. The story might with equal justice have been called *Peachum Philosophe* or *Peachum Chez Nous*.

These ladies were "deux de ces ouvrières qui vont en journée la nuit." Their trade of pleasure was ungrateful, often laborious. But they respected the Sabbath, were economical, and maintained their parents. *Elles tenaient le haut du pavé.* None better walked the streets. And then the younger sister, Olympe, made a slip. She fell in love with a poor student. One day the elder sister, Henriette, who had now to bear the burden of the family alone, met Olympe in the street, dressed simply, without a hat, and carrying a little jug in her hand. Henriette pretended not to know her, whispering as she passed: "Your conduct is unpardonable. You might at least respect appearances!"

Olympe blushed and passed on. Bienfilâtre made one attempt to rescue his daughter. He climbed the stairs of the student's poor lodging.

"Give me back my child," he sobbed.

"I love her," replied the student, "and I will marry her."

"Wretch,' replied Bienfilâtre, turning away revolted by such cynicism.

Soon after, Henriette meets her shameless sister in a café, and harangues her before the customers assembled over their little glasses. "Is there not such a thing as duty to one's family? . . . A ne'er-do-well without a sou. . . . Social ostracism. . . . No sense of responsibility. . . . We are not brought into this world for pleasure. . . ."

Olympe takes to her bed and dies, literally of shame. To the priest she murmurs: "J'ai eu un amant! Pour le plaisir! Sans rien gagner!" The lover appearing, Olympe repulses him with a gesture of horror. Then, as the dying girl perceives the glint of gold pieces in the student's hand, actually the examination fees which he has received from his parents and now hurries to pour into her lap, her face takes on a look of ecstasy which the priest mistakes for a proof of the redemption to come. Murmuring: "He has repented. God has given him light," the girl expires.

But perhaps it is Polly's innocence which has kept *The Beggar's Opera* sweet. It may be that it is easier to keep that quality fragrant than

to ensure that wit shall remain astringent and aseptic. And so we come back to the milkmaid at the end. The manners of the eighteenth century are no longer; to contemplate those times too seriously is to risk giving them countenance; it were safer, perhaps, to take the story with an air of its being too preposterous to be true. It is not, however, to be thought that Hazlitt saw the play so, nor that Fielding is to be read in that light. We come back to the original statement that here is the most delightful entertainment on the stage to-day, provided always that the mind is granted full liberty to bring to it what it likes.

An Evening at Collins's

Vulgarity is an implicit element of the true music-hall. . . . Out of the vulgarity of the people did the music-hall arise, nor will anyone be so foolish as to contend that, by tampering with its foundations, we shall go one step towards refining the people.

MAX BEERBOHM.

THAT delicate and penetrative writer, Dixon Scott, imagines in one of his playful essays the more than cosmopolitan Mr Walkley for the nonce *désorienté*. The Five Towns it is which bring to a disconcerting standstill this "picked man of countries." "Where *are* they?" he asks wearily and a trifle shamefacedly, after the manner of a schoolboy stumped for the whereabouts of Carthage. I, in my turn, no "student of the drama" since there is little on the English stage left to study save Mr Oscar Asche's sham orientalism and Mr Hichens's real camels, must confess to a singular ignorance of theatrical activity outside the quarter-mile radius. "Where *is* Collins's?" and "Who *is* Mr George Carney?" would therefore have risen naturally to my lips, and not at all in the judicial manner, *pour rire*, when a youth, engaged in mending my bicycle, hopelessly confused his tale of the machine's defects with references to a place called Collins's, that fellow Carney, and a certain history confided by some colonel to his adjutant. Would have risen to my lips, I say—but here some explanation is necessary.

I have from youth up cherished an extreme dislike for lack of definition in the things that matter, and an equal repugnance for a pedantic accuracy in the things which do not matter at

all. I abhor all those befogged conceptions and blurred declarations of faith which are the stock-in-trade of half the philosophers and three-fourths of the clergy. Tell me definitely that Space is curved and I will believe it, though truth wear a German complexion. Deny that Space is curved, and certify the same on the Royal Society's proper form for denials, and I will consider to which camp I will belong. But let there be no "iffing and affing," as they say in Lancashire. It annoys me that people can turn the careless side of their intelligence to such fundamental affairs as Time and Space, the nature of matter, the *impasse* of a self-existent or a created universe, whilst taking the most passionate interest in such trivia as dates and places, the addresses of tradespeople and the hours of trains. I do not ever hope to remember the name or number of the street in which I live, nor have I for years been able to discriminate between the keepers of my lodging-houses. All landladies are one, co-equal, co-eternal and co-incomprehensible. I hate to decide what I shall do on Saturday, to determine whether the air will be fresher at Ramsgate or Margate, Southend or Clacton-on-Sea. I am in complete ignorance of the geography of London, and invariably take what is called a hackney coach from King's Cross to St Pancras. I have for many years left the choice of place of amusement to the discerning cabby. "Anywhere you like," say I, "except *Chu Chin*

Chow. Wherever one may be set down, the prime condition of life will be fulfilled—to see yet more of an amusing world and its humanity. Few people have shown a more philosophic appreciation than Bernard Clark and Ethel Monticue when they "oozed forth" into the streets. The phrase accurately describes my first attempt to find Collins's music-hall.

I had always "placed" Collins's as lying vaguely south of the river, somewhere between the Elephant and the Obelisk, Now the game of inattention to the trivialities of life has its rules, and one of them is that having made your intellectual bed so you must lie on it. You are to have the courage of your lack of mental industry. You have not attended to the lesson; you may not crib the answer. To dine at Princes' and bid the commissionaire whistle an instructed taxi were outside the code. No; I had placed Collins's near the Obelisk, and near the Obelisk I must find it, first dining befittingly and then oozing forth afoot. This may not be the place to describe a dinner "at the Obelisk." Sufficient to say that if the cuts were not prime, the manners of my fellow-guests undoubtedly were. They did their meal the courtesy of being hungry; they ate, but not because it was the polite hour. They made no conversation, because they were not afraid of silence. My neighbour, an itinerant musician — in plain English he played a fiddle in the gutter—was, I judged, a man of uncertain character, but

definite education. He forbore to relate his history. I discovered that he spoke French perfectly when, apropos of the *œillades* of some poor draggle-tail at a neighbouring table, we fell to discussing the efficacy of the Duchess's revenge in Barbey d'Aurevilly's story—a good tale, but sadly lacking the American quality of "uplift." I let slip, as they say, that I was bound for Collins's, and my friend took occasion to point out that I was very much out of my course. I thanked him and listened to his indications for the following evening, it being a dispensation of the Inattentivists that you are not bound to reject information thrust upon you. We talked until the hour at which a paternal Government decrees that polite conversation in public places shall cease. And separated. But not before my fellow-artist had warmed sufficiently to me to hint that he was "doing well," and that he hoped next year to enter his son for Eton.

Islington I found to be perfectly well informed both as to the locality of Collins's and the reputation of Mr Carney. If not within a stone's-throw of the Angel, the hall yet contrives to be at so nice a distance that one may transfer oneself from one house of entertainment to the other without, as old Quex has it, the trouble of drawing on one's gloves. There is nothing of listless, well-bred indifference in a visit to Collins's; you must be prepared to take the red plush benches by storm if you would be in at North London's taking to heart of that rarity among comedians, an

actor with a comic sense. I like to watch the curtain go up, having first enjoyed my fill of its bewitching advertisements. I like to watch the musicians file in, to see the flute-player put his instrument together, and that honest workman, the double-bass, spit on his hands, as all honest workmen should. I adore the operation of tuning-up, the precision of those little runs and trills executed in as perfect light-heartedness as the golfer's preliminary swing. The conductor at these places is a captivating personage; he epitomises the glory of suburbia—dinner jacket, "dickey," and white, ready-made bow. The overture at Collins's, perfunctory, gladiatorial, had a familiar air about it, although the programme was not helpful. I should hate to think that a piece with which I am familiar can really be *The Woodbine Willie Two-Step.* Followed turns of which, or of whom, the chief were a juggler striking matches on his skull, a stout lady with a thin voice, *prima donna* of some undisclosed opera company, and a Versatile Comedy Four having to do with bicycles. At length and at last, Mr George Carney.

The first of his two "song-scenas" is a study of grandeur and decadence, of magnificence on its last legs, dandyism in the gutter, pride surviving its fall; in plain English, a tale of that wreckage of the Embankment which was once a gentleman. He wears a morning coat which, in spite of irremediable tatters, has obviously known the sunshine of Piccadilly, has yet some hang of

nobility. The torn trousers still wear their plaid with an air. *Enfin*, the fellow was at one time gloved and booted. There is something authentic, something inherited, something ghostly about this seedy figure. Trailing clouds of glory does he haunt the Embankment. The ebony cane, the eyeglass with the watered ribbon, the grey topper of the wide and curling brim—all these fond accoutrements of fashion bring back the delightful nineties, so closely are they the presentment, the counterfeit presentment, of the swell of those days. "Bancroft to the life!" we mutter. And our mind goes back to that bygone London of violet nights and softly-jingling hansom cabs, discreet lacquer and harness of cheerful brass—nocturnes, if ever such things were, in black and gold—the London of yellow asters and green carnations; of a long-gloved *diseuse*, and, in the photographer's window, a delicious Mrs Patrick Campbell eating something dreadfully expensive off the same plate as Mr George Alexander; of a hard-working Max with one volume of stern achievement and all Time before him; of a Café Royal where poets and not yet bookmakers forgathered; of a score of music-halls which were not for the young person. . . . But I am getting away from Mr Carney.

The matter is not very much above our heads —something about a Count who has "taken the count." The purest stuff of the music-hall, as a music-hall song should be. "There's a n'ole 'ere!" pipes with fierce glee the cherub boot-

black, bending over the broken boots and abating the deference to the broken swell no jot of his Trade Union rate of "frippence." How it hurts, the contempt and raillery of this pitiless infant? *Enfant goguenard* if ever there was one, a capitalist in his small way, and with all the shopkeeper's scorn of failure. "There's a n'ole 'ere!" he insists, and we are reminded of Kipps's tempestuous friend, "a nactor-fellow." "Not a n'ole—an aperture, my dear fellow, an aperture," corrects the noble client, "the boots were patent, but the patent's expired." Here the Count drops his cigar and indulges in unseemly scuffle with the urchin. "No, you don't," says the riper smoker, regaining possession, "that's how *I* got it." But the child has yet another arrow. "Landlady says as 'ow you've got to share beds wiv a dustman." But the shaft fails to wound; clearly our hero is of the Clincham mould to whom social distinctions are as "piffle before the wind." "Want a pyper?" goads the boy, and his client lays out his last remaining copper. He unfolds the sheets and instinctively his eye runs over the fashionable intelligence. "Know Colonel Br'th'l'pp at all?" he inquires. This one recognises as the delightful touch of the man of the world anxious to put a social inferior at his ease. Something after this manner, one imagines, Royalty. "Doing very well in Russia. Was up at Cambridge with his brother, the *elder* Br'th'l'pp, don' cher know." And so to babble of the day's gossip to the scornful child at his

feet. The courtesy, I submit, of one man of polish to another.

Night falls, the river puts on its jewels, the result of a cunning arrangement of n'oles and n'apertures in the back-cloth, it draws very cold. More pitiful than the accustomed heir of destitution, but with stiff upper lip, our *déclassé* shivers, draws his rags more closely about him and moves on.

But it is the second song which brings down the house. Here the actor appears as an Army cook, and at Islington we have all been Army cooks in our time. A couple of dixies, the stew in which is discoverable last week's "Dickey Dirt," talk of "jippo" and "the doings"—all the familiar traffic of the camp rises to the mind's eye and sets the house in a roar. We are not, we gather, in any theatre of war, but safely at home in halcyon, far-off training days. Almost you can hear the cheerful clatter of the canteen, the thud and rattle of the horse-lines. The wording of the song is in no sense precious.

"*What was the tale the Colonel told the Adjutant,*
What did the Adjutant say to Major Brown?"

There is a chorus, also serving as *corps de ballet*, and consisting first of the inveterate grumbler who objects to the presence in his coffee of so harmless a beastie as a "drahned mahse"—the accent is a mixture of Devon and Berkshire with a dash of Cockney. Then comes the superior youth of ingratiating, behind-the-counter manner,

the proud possessor, we feel sure, of a manicure set in ivory—does he not abstractedly polish his nails with the end of the towel? After him the "old sweat" who will neither die nor fade away, and lastly our rosy boot-black, now the dear brother-in-arms of the immortal Lew and Jakin. This nucleus of an Army has but a single mind: to know what has become of its blinking dinner. Many and various are their ways of putting it, and it appears that they are no more than Messengers or Forerunners of the cohorts pressing on their heels. But the orderly beguiles their impatience.

"What did the Major whisper to the Captain?
The Captain told the Subs to hand it down."

The orderly is the slipshod, inefficient, imperturbable "bloke" we know so well; with him we are to rise to what Mr Chesterton calls "the dazzling pinnacle of the commonplace." I am not sure that this is not the best of all this author's fireworks; it is so stupendous a rocket that the stick has cleared the earth, never to return but to go on whirling around us for evermore. Mr Carney is the embodiment of the commonplace civilian turned warrior. He is the cook who will drop into the stew all manner of inconsidered trifles: cigarette ash, match ends, articles of personal attire. He is the hero who will be up to all the petty knavery and "lead-swinging" that may be going, who will "work dodges" with the worst of them, and, on occasion,

join with the best in such deeds—he would still call them "dodges"—as shall put terror into the hearts of a ten times outnumbering foe. Of that order of heroic cooks which held Ypres. But it is part and parcel of this actor's generalship that he will have no truck with heroics. Tell Mr Carney that he raises tears and he will make a mock of you. Or more probably he will continue his song.

"What did the Quarter-master tell the Sergeant?
The Sergeant told the Corp'ril, it appears;
The Corp'ril told the Private and the Private told his girl,
Now she's looking for Mademoiselle from Armenteers."

Have I over-glorified my subject, whose talent is not more remarkably expended than on a dixie and a soldier's ration of stew? Ah, but was not always one of the great tests for comic acting the power to throw a preternatural interest over the commonest objects of daily life? "What," say you, pricking your ears at the familiar phrase, "surely at this time of day you are not going to dish up that old stuff about kitchen tables and constellatory importance, joint-stools and Cassiopeia's chair?" Oh, but I am, and let appositeness be my apology. "So the gusto of Munden antiquates and ennobles what it touches. His pots and his ladles are as grand and primal as the seething-pots and hooks seen in old prophetic vision." Why should I not elevate, an

it please me, Mr Carney's pot and ladle to the same high category? I do not ask you to see in this actor an image of primeval man lost in wonder of the sun and stars, but I do ask you to believe that a tin of "bully" contemplated by him amounts, or very nearly amounts, to a Platonic idea. Grant at least that he understands a dixie in its quiddity. It may be that in my estimate of this conscientious comedian I have overshot the just mean. Well, granting that my little appraisement is an error, it seems to me to be an error on the right side. I have a comfortable feeling that Islington at least is with me, that I have a solid popular backing. Collins's pit and stalls, circle and gallery would have borne me out that the actor diffused a glow of sentiment "which made the pulse of a crowded theatre beat like that of one man"; would have probably agreed that he had "come in aid of the pulpit, doing good to the moral heart of a people."

I do not think that in expanding Islington's approval I have misread it. Its ecstatic hand-clapping and shouts of "Good ole George! Good *ole* George!" cannot deceive an ear attuned to shades of applause. The civilian on my left with the wound-stripes on his sleeve is dumb with appreciation. His lips are parted, his breath comes in short gasps, his eyes are fixed on the stage seeing and not seeing, his whole soul in some setting of the past. I am sure he hears once more the clatter of the canteen and the cheerful rattle of the horse-lines. The

soldier on my right, still in the Army's grip and not yet victim of the nostalgia to come—a very small fly in demobilisation's ointment, but there it is—is drunk, simply, uncomplicatedly drunk, with the lilt and swing of the tune. He rises half out of his seat, puts a steadying hand on my arm, and with the other wildly conducts the house now singing in chorus :

"What was the tale the Colonel told the Adjutant?
What did the Adjutant say to Major Brown?
What did the Major whisper to the Captain?
The Captain told the Subs to hand it down.
What did the Quarter-master tell the Sergeant?
The Sergeant told the Corp'ril, it appears,
The Corp'ril told the Private and the Private told his girl,
Now she's looking for Mademoiselle from Armenteers."

There is a limit to the number of recalls even the most grateful servant of the public may permit himself, and at last Mr Carney is allowed to retire in favour of the next turn. But my friend on the right takes some little time to simmer down. "Good ole George!" he continues to mutter under his breath. "Oh, good *ole* George!" And as the tumblers who come next are a dull pair, I wend my way out.

Incidental Music and Some Shakespeare

OF all the actors, scene-painters and musicians who were to breathe life into the revival of *The Tempest* at the Aldwych Theatre only Mr Arthur Bliss achieved any measure of success. When he was silent Shakespeare was silent too. There was also Sullivan to babble of magic islands, but a' babbled after the wrong fashion. Still, it is time the Muse was put in her place. Eminent concert critics have flattered that young lady till she is now out of hand. "The theatrical shows are sad experiences for the musicians," writes Mr Ernest Newman. "I rarely go to the legitimate theatre. A serious play, even if it is a work of genius, merely echoes what is said so much more tellingly in the music of the great masters." Stuff and nonsense! Lord Burleigh's nod were then as nothing compared with this cyclopædic bowing and scraping. A theme for oboe, double-bass and triangle is no longer a pleasing concatenation but a full statement of, say, Racine's version of an Æschylean tragedy. Strike C five times running and you are to suppose Andromaque, C sharp and you get Pyrrhus, F and you are sure of Hermione. Orestes, that wild beast of the compassionate entrails whose name I will not Frenchify, alone remains.

> "So add B flat for tiger's chaudron
> And Orestes pops up in cauldron."

Bandy the phrase about a little, make the gruel thick and slab, and there is no longer need of Racine to tell us all about it.[1]

Now this won't do. Music may be the sublimest of the arts, but it is also the least complicated. It makes up for being the least intellectual by being the most purely emotional. It is the only art which appeals to the brute creation. No dog, however intelligent, reads Mr Max Beerbohm; no horse, however tyroical, appreciates Mr Wyndham Lewis. Orpheus may have had his way with trees, mountain tops that freeze, plants, flowers, the billows of the sea; but we are not told of his success with pit and stalls. Music may be elemental as sun and wind, but that does not mean that it is to ride rough-shod over us in our playhouses, the most rigorous excluders, Heaven knows, of daylight and fresh air. The French, rightly, have banished music from their theatres. But then they are jealous for their actors and they know the truth of the matter. They know that, with certain reservations, critics like Mr Ernest Newman are right, and that music, which is merely in the way when the play and the acting are good, may be the one thing that will save bad acting and bad plays.

[1] It is conceivable that music might be of use in "recommending" a snippet, in giving a "reference" as to character. In the fifth act of *Andromaque*, which we have recently seen dragged raw and bleeding from its context, Hermione has all her work cut out to imply in a single gesture that she is annoyed with her betrothed for slaying at her instigation the man with whom she is really in love, just because he has blackmailed another woman into marrying him. *C'est trop*, and an elucidatory blast from one of Mr Newman's trombones might help.

In Shakespearean tragedy music is to be abhorred; in the purely human comedies it is an unmitigated nuisance; in the masques and fairy plays it has a certain salvage value.

The Tempest on the stage stands badly in need of salvaging. I have never been able to take a liking to it as a stage-play, although painfully conscious that the big guns are against me. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has decided that he would rather have written *The Tempest* than *Othello*, *Hamlet* or *Lear*. "For I can just imagine a future age of men, in which their characterisation has passed into a curiosity, a pale thing of antiquity; as I can barely imagine, yet can just imagine, a world in which the murder of Desdemona, the fate of Cordelia, will be considered curiously, as brute happenings proper to a time outlived; and again, while I reverence the artist who in Othello or Lear purges our passion, forcing us to weep for present human woe, *The Tempest*, as I see it, forces diviner tears, tears for sheer beauty; with a royal sense of this world and how it passes away, with a catch at the heart of what is to come. And still the sense is royal; it is the majesty of art: we *feel* that we are greater than we know. So on the surge of our emotion, as on the surges ringing Prospero's island, is blown a spray, a mist. Actually it dwells in our eyes, bedimming them, and as involuntarily we would brush it away, there rides in it a rainbow, and its colours are wisdom and charity, with forgiveness, tender ruth for all men and

women growing older, and perennial trust in young love."

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch is a critic worthy of respect. The passage is a beautiful one, but I cannot help thinking that it was wrought and hammered in the study and not jotted down on a theatre programme between the acts of the play.

In the theatre Prospero is the difficulty; there is nothing to be done with him. Never were there such dramatic *longueurs* as those unending speeches. Realising that Prospero is not an amusing conversationalist, his creator constantly nudges the audience. "Dost thou attend me?" "Thou attend'st not." "Dost thou hear me?" "I pray thee, mark me." There is no human interest in this wind-bag.

The normal method of playing Prospero as a compound of Good King Wenceslas and Father Christmas is failure in advance. Neither of these old fogeys may say with conviction:

"I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifled Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art."

Prospero should be august, terrible, not quite of this world. He is of the cellarage, an old mole come to the upper world, uncanny, a sight to awe. Irving could never have delivered himself of the verse, but his incantations had not been without potency. You would have been terrified by the spirits of his beck and call. Mr Ainley was irresistible in the wrong way. He endowed Prospero with *charm*. His womanish, clean-shaven countenance, his carefully silvered, Whistlerian lock of hair, the purple mantle at which he perpetually hitched and thrutched as though it had not been the garment of twenty years' custom, the perfunctory wavings of a wand in which there was neither magic nor terror—the whole aspect of Prospero was that of a masculine fairy queen. A great critic, writing of a player of another day, said: "His Prospero was good for nothing; and, consequently, was indescribably bad. It was grave without solemnity, stately without dignity, pompous without being impressive, and totally destitute of the wild, mysterious, preternatural character of the original. Prospero, as depicted by Mr Young, did not appear the potent wizard brooding in gloomy abstraction over the secrets of his art, and around whom spirits and airy shapes throng numberless 'at his bidding'; but seemed himself an automaton, stupidly prompted by others: his lips moved up and down as if pulled by wires, not governed by the deep and varied impulses of passion." So Mr Ainley.

Caliban may be played simply as a monster, grotesque and terrible, or he may be humanised into a thing of pity. The power and truth of Mr Louis Calvert's performance seemed to be contained solely in the character's legs, stuccoed, like one of Mr E.T. Reed's monsters, with jags and tufts of hair. These were the only grotesque feature of the performance. For the rest, the actor went down on his knees like paterfamilias on the hearthrug playing at bear. Never can there have been such a miscasting as Miss Winifred Barnes. Nothing, one felt, was going to suit this chubby little sister of Ariel's less than a return to the raw, unsophisticated elements. She sang the songs fairly well. "We do not, however, wish to hear them sung, though never so well; no music can add anything to their magical effect.—The words of Shakespeare would be sweet, even 'after the songs of Apollo!'" I ask those Shakespearean producers who will inflict music upon us to note that these words are not mine.

The incidental music to *Henry IV., Part II.*, at the Court Theatre was perfection. There wasn't any! But *Henry IV.* is an acting play and can stand alone. This simple unpretentious production, although not amazingly well acted, was yet full of quiet satisfaction. Mr Fagan tidied up the sprawling play into three exquisite parcels, the first containing all that is richest in Falstaff, the second disposing to kingly seriousness, the third a burst of sunshine in a Gloucestershire

garden three hundred years ago. It was wonderfully mellow and full of the orchard-sense of the ripest of all comedies. Mr Frank Cellier's King was in exactly the right key. It had not too much bodily majesty which, indeed, should not be asked. What sick and dying man may keep more than the frailest hold upon the slipping robe of kingship? Mr Basil Rathbone's Prince achieved a certain height of moral grandeur free from priggishness, but for me a Harry of long ago bars the way to any later appreciation. I refer to the unforgettable performance of Mr Courtenay Thorpe in the nineties. Laurence Irving was the Justice Shallow in those days, and again I could not see Mr H. O. Nicholson's clever performance with unclouded eyes. As usual the part of Feeble was entirely misconceived. To this steely soul in woman's body is given the most valiant of Shakespeare's utterances upon death: "By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once: we owe God a death: I'll ne'er bear a base mind: An't be my destiny, so; An't be not, so: no man's too good to serve's prince; and let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quit for the next." Now, either Shakespeare did not mean Feeble to be an utter fool or he momentarily ignored him and filled him up out of the superfluity of his own passion. It is a risky thing to say that an actor misconceives his part. I remember that a suggestion of mine that a young man of breeding could quarrel with his mother and achieve impertinence without

putting his feet up on the sofa drew down upon me from the actor the very succinct rebuke: "Critical sir, quite so. *But have you never heard of the producer?*" But this is by the way.

Henry IV. can never be more than a casket enshrining Falstaff. Here is a problem to confront the actor. In that saddest of all comic passages: "And is old Double dead!" the barren emptiness of life is made bare; in every line of Falstaff there is life everlasting. Only it is life upon this earth, the life of the gross body and also of the wit nimble, apprehensive, fiery, quick and delectable. One half of Falstaff is meaningless without its complement; the actor shall give you the tidy little Bartholomew boar-pig, the glutton, the foiner, the opportunist; but he shall also insist upon the greatheart and the fallen Knight. Do players study their parts beyond conning them by rote? Does Othello spend day and night bethinking him into that savage skin, or does he rely for shadowed livery solely upon his box of paints? Does Falstaff take counsel *beyond his own cogitations*? I should like to think that every player of Sir John has taken to heart not only the lines of his part but every line of another famous passage. "He manures and nourishes his mind with jests, as he does his body with sack and sugar. He carves out his jokes, as he would a capon or a haunch of venison, where there is *cut and come again*; and pours out upon them the oil of gladness. His tongue

drops fatness, and in the chambers of his brain it snows of meat and drink."

Mr Alfred Clark's Falstaff was a replica of small size. He had not the intellectual thews and stature, the antique villainy, the sly licorousness. Corruption in him hardly raised its head, nor were the humours of the authentic dropsical. A chuckle displaced the giant roar; the light of jocularity would twinkle in his eye but fail to come to birth, unthinkable miscarriage in that master of fecundity as of all other human attributes. He did not dominate Pistol in the brawl. But Bardolph's "Sir" was a tribute to the gentleman, and this side of him the actor conveyed admirably. He kept Falstaff's fallen day about him. Yet to him Doll had never opened out with her fine "Come on, you whoreson chops." Nor could this pleasant country squire have compassed the gross pleasantry of his *entrée en matière*: "Sirrah, you giant, what says the doctor," etc. Nor yet declare: "I do here walk before thee like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one." Falstaff, with his wide-awake brain, was alive to the hoggish possibility. No degeneration there! A captain of rare parts in command of an unruly body of members. A better man than the Prince. He warmed both hands before the fire of life, and none has ever been ready that the old fellow should depart.

Vesta Ave Atque Vale

There's a tune in my head to-night,
As I walk, as I talk,
And it swoons in a whirl of light
(While the day fades away)
And I hear my heart as it beats
A refrain, and again
I am splashed by the mud of the streets,
And again feel the rain.

ARTHUR SYMONS.

IT could be wished that poets and philosophers were not such cozeners. To make the best of a bad business is a form of worldly wisdom, a policy and no more. But where the business is so bad that no amelioration is possible, your poet and philosopher will have it that it cannot be such a bad business after all. Necessary evil, be thou my good! they cry. But like the essayist who was honest with himself, I take death to be the capital plague-sore. Like him I can in no way be brought to digest that "thin, melancholy *Privation*." Yet those others will tell us that since no man has aught of what he leaves, 'tis naught to leave betimes; that he must be very impatient, who would repine at death in the society of all things that suffer under it; that no man can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied. Well, I am not satisfied and there's an end of it. One of the great dissatisfactions of my life is the retirement of actors. *Partir, c'est mourir un peu.* To say good-bye is to die a little. To bid farewell to the stage is to depart wholly; these ceremonious leave-takings are only one degree less chillsome than the last adjurations. I dislike all partings, adieux,

valedictories. I hate to pray for Buckingham, and have a distaste for the slow decline. I would leave ships to sink and dying men to die; the pity's too abominable. I would pretend that age and death are not, and on the stage that players remain what they have always been. Let the retired actor live in our memories if it be of comfort to him; 'tis none to us. To comfort me must Ellen T——y be a goblin?

Actors should die in harness. I open my paper o' mornings and, turning first to the column of theatrical advertisements, still look to see *Olivia*, Miss Ellen Terry; *Susan Hartley*, Mrs Kendal; *Quex*, Sir John Hare; *Old Songs and New Favourites*, Miss Vesta Tilley. It is with this little lady that I am concerned here. I will not say that appreciation in volume of applause has not been deep enough. Palms may wear out with clapping, voices hoarsen through cheering, curtains part again and again to give yet one more glimpse of that trim, taut little figure with the boyish hair, boyish manner and proud, boyish smile—and yet leave something unexpressed.

I remember as though it were not more than a year ago the first time I saw Vesta Tilley. It was my first pantomine, and I recall to this day her clearness of enunciation and tiny modicum of voice. In recollection I breathe again the "tart ozone" of her distinction. She was not content with being just Aladdin or Dick, Sinbad, Robinson or Prince Charming. She was the "masher" of those days, and how long ago those days are

you best can tell by entering the snuggery of some theatrical house of entertainment and examining the faded photographs on the wall. There you will find beauty long since faded with the rose—simpering, wistful memories. Belle Bilton and May Yohé, Letty Lind, Harriet Vernon, Lottie Collins, Maggie Duggan. Among these melancholy pictures you will of a surety espy one of a trim little figure in a dress-coat curiously rounded and curved, with what is obviously a red silk handkerchief—the note of the period—in the shirt-front. Other images there will be of that long succession of "Midnight Sons," "Piccadilly Johnnies," "Burlington Berties," heady youths all, with an amazing selection of waistcoats, gloves, ties and canes. They are the embodiment of the bucks the most modest of us in our hearts knew ourselves in those far-away days to be. Burton may talk contemptuously of the transmogrification of the toga'd citizen into terms of boiled shirt, dove-tailed coat, black-cloth clothes, white pocket-handkerchief and diamond ring. Vesta Tilley has always known better than to be contemptuous of clothes. Her waistcoats have had both a devastating and a moral effect upon the young man. Her visits to provincial towns were occasions for extravagant launchings-out on the part of the "cards" into suits of clothes they could ill afford; but never, on the other hand, did these visits fail to lead to a more regular pressing under the mattress of workaday trousers. To what vain comparisons,

to what futile emulations did we not surrender ourselves? But the influence was all to the good. You have only to read Mr Arnold Bennett to realise that well-creased trousers, even if a trifle worn, have more influence on a young man's career than a verbatim knowledge of the poets. And didn't hearts beat soundly beneath the creases? Weren't the hearts of the gay and giddy young "clurks," as Miss Tilley has always called them, in the right place in their bodies if not in my prose? Didn't they volunteer for the South African War? Not 'arf! *Welcome, welcome, C.I.V.'s.* And has she not cheered in greater circumstance the children of those earlier heroes? Of all the songs, *Jolly Good Luck to the Girl Who Loves a Soldier* was perhaps the best. It had the most heart in it. It showed the "rookie" puffing behind his big cigar, his heart swelling with pride and just a little too full for words. The suspicion of a tear brushed away upon the pipeclayed cuff, one more roll and lick of the cigar, one more tug at the belt, and with swagger-stick under arm the boy would march away, the heir to all our military glory.

"Dost thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?" Yes, we do think this. Vesta Tilley was ever a boy whom nothing could unman. Master of her characters, she was mistress of herself. Was there ever such triumphant storming of an audience, such dignified acceptance of their fealty? Has ever actor since Irving so

proudly proclaimed himself the public's "loving, grateful and obedient servant"?

Recently, in an old lumber-room, I came across a fretwork frame, made in the days when boys did that sort of thing, containing five photographs of Vesta Tilley. Two of them were illustrative of Happy Hampton and the Sad Sea Waves, the others showed a recruit, a Piccadilly Johnny, and an amazing young gentleman, presently to enlist in the C.I.V.'s, and now clad in a waistcoat quartered into the emblems of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and having at the end of his gold-mounted cane the flag of Empire. Is the lumber-room a fitting shrine? *Nenni!* Not in that sad repository but in the storehouse of the mind shall she be preserved. But it will take more than Shakespeare, Synge or Sir Thomas Browne, with whose trite philosophies I began, to persuade me that she should have departed at all. It may be true that no one can be acting for ever. I am not satisfied.

Charlie Chaplin[1]

Hey, but he's doleful!
Patience.

IF you did not reflect you might say that Covent Garden, when it opened its arms to Charlie Chaplin, underwent "a reverse." The haunt of beaux quizzing a Bride of Lammermoor virginal at fifty summers, of belles deliciously *pâmées* before some Italian Puss-in-Boots masquerading as Edgardo—surely the old Opera House suffered a "come-down" when for these sublimities were substituted a pair of middling boxers and their attendant "fans." And now must the great building bemean itself still further, and drink of the very dregs of disgrace, the silent buffoonery of the billycock and cane. The last indignity this; more, you might plead, than these old bricks and mortar should be asked to endure. I do not agree. I am to comfort the old house, to bid it take heart again. I declare with the utmost seriousness that in the thumpings of Messrs Beckett and McCormick I find a deeper note of conviction than ever I do in the roulades of be-wigged and be-ringleted puppets. I declare that in the acting of this film-comedian I find sincerity great as any bruiser's, and a mastery of tragi-comedy unknown to the operatic stage. (I except the Russians, who have nothing to do with the Garden.) Almost am I persuaded to divert the trickle of my theme, which is Charlie Chaplin, into the

[1] This chapter, and the four which succeed it, appeared originally in *The Saturday Review*, and are reprinted by the kind permission of the Editor of that paper.

more general stream of "The Opera Revisited" or "Grandeur and Decadence Reversed." The title, "Sed Revocare Gradum," were nicely to hand. What jollier than a hymn to the ridiculous turned sublime? Charlie is my more immediate darling, however, and I will stick to my text.

Charlie Chaplin sublime? This is some writer's trick, say you, some literary flourish. I lay my hand on my heart and swear that it is not, that there is, at least for me, more emotion in a single tear of *The Kid* than in all the bucketfuls of "Vesti la giubba." "But," you reply, "what nonsense have we here? All the world knows that Charlie Chaplin is a clown." But just as there is laughter and laughter, so there are clowns and clowns. Here let me promise that I have no intention of following the comic spirit into Meredithian or Bergsonian fastnesses. I know a funny fellow without the help of your greybeards. A funny fellow is he who makes me laugh, willy-nilly, without discoverable reason. So that great moon-calf, Grock. So Mr Fred Kitchen. So any of your essential drolls. But not so Charlie. At him I laugh for reasons which I know instinctively to be eminently discoverable. The first glimpse of that little shuffling gnome sets all my critical faculties stirring; I want to probe and dissect, to analyse, to trace that humour to the source I know it must ultimately reveal. I am on my critical guard. Whereas the other side to the

actor's genius, his immense and confounding pathos, finds me utterly defenceless. Let that lip droop for an instant and the Nile is here. I care not whence it comes.

Place must be found for a short dissertation upon the sense of humour, lest I be deemed as bereft thereof as was Eliza's husband. For I do not look to join the agelastic choir—Mr Dombey and the author of the *Hymn of Hate*, Mrs Humphry Ward, Mr Drinkwater's Abraham Lincoln—who had surely by our little clown been unamused. I doubt whether Charlie had been commanded to Victorian Windsor; Mr Gladstone had certainly turned him into a sermon. Humour is a kittle thing. Let me, when I would laugh royally, have comedians about me that are fat. I am for Falstaff and Bully Bottom, Micawber and Herbert Campbell. I leave to more reflective mood those brain-teasers, Malvolio and Jingle, Smike[1] and Mr Alfred Lester. I adore the rotundity of Potash but cope less easily with Perlmutter. I worship the little butter-pat which is Jeff; Mutt is apt to become an intellectual strain. I repeat that when I hold my sides, I do not want to know why. There is, alas! a kind of fellow, much about these days, who insists upon always knowing why, and in his nosings leads our wittiest by that organ. Mr Walkley is the latest sufferer from what I will call Crocitis, with

[1] Strictly speaking, Smike is perhaps more a tragic than a comic creation. I leave him here, however, as he seems to me to be at least as funny as Mr Lester.

Bergsonian relapses. Does he not tell us that Mr Robey, as a Venetian minstrel with a stuffed monkey pinned to his coat-tails, exemplifies the dictum that the secret of the comic is "something mechanical encrusted upon the living"? The solemn figure of Professor Bergson must here have come between Mr Walkley and the stage, else had he told us that in this scene Mr Robey was less funny than in the others. And now I suppose I shall be told that the famous boots and trousers are mechanical encrustations upon the living Charlie Chaplin. Rubbish! To the clear-sighted they are barnacles, retardative of a swifter wit. The secret of this clowning is that it is ever so much more than trouser-deep. I do not laugh when my intellectual interests are aroused. I do not laugh when Pécuchet ridiculously rushes to Bouvard in his Government office to announce on the first day of spring, "J'ai ôté ma flanelle!" I hardly laugh when, in the French play, the retired grocer, whose daughter is to marry a lawyer, erects in his back-garden a statue to Cicero for the purpose of hurling at it the apostrophe: "Ciceron, tu ne vaux pas mon gendre!" I do not laugh at Charlie till I cry. I laugh lest I cry, which is a very different matter. And, therefore, I bid Covent Garden lift up its heart and say with me: "Caruso, tu ne vaux pas mon Charlot!"

It is not denied that there is a natural fun about our hero which is not subject to reason; that his moustache, like the eyebrows of Mr

Robey or the headgear of Mr Churchill, approaches the border-line which divides the higher genius of man from the lesser works of God. There is in his transmutation of bedspread into dressing-gown a comicality which is one with the comic spirit and indivisible. Since both are invested with "constellatory importance," kinship is attained with the laughter of the spheres. The more I cast about for the why and wherefore of this absolute thing, this humour which is a part of Original Creation, lent to Charlie at birth, now worn by him as a mantle, the more I am teased out of thought. I am content to hold my unthinking sides. There are aspects, however, about which we may legitimately reason. There is the quality of logic. In *Shoulder Arms* the duckings in the flooded dug-out are not simply lunatic. The fellow puts his head under water because the pillow upon which he would lay it is submerged. He would blow out his candle, afloat on the water and unmoored, and his puffs direct it whither we have all along foreseen it must go, under the toes of the neighbour bed-fellow. In another film you see him with a mongrel endeavouring to enter a drinking-saloon where dogs are not admitted. Charlie is in no way nonplussed; he envelops the tyke in his expansive trousers. But the tail emerging through a preposterous hole, and its owner's owner taking his drink cheek by jowl with the big drum of the saloon-orchestra, heaven and earth, and more particu-

larly earth, are disastrously aroused with resonant and persistent thump. Euclidean, this. Even more important is the close-doubled relation between humour and pathos. Forlornly this desolate soldier nibbles the cheese out of the mouse-trap because, of all the company, he alone has received no parcel from home. Jealously he reads over the shoulders of his companions the letters which he alone has been denied. His interest in their contents is personal, and the poignancy of that wry smile and the child-like eyes welling with a child's disappointment is such as the articulate comedian, with all his mumblings and mouthings, had hardly achieved. When, sharing his "kip" with the Kid, he rolls over and takes with him all the covering, he does but intensify the care with which he had tucked the little mite in. In the agony of his search for the little fellow he must needs look between mattress and bed-board. Charlie cannot embark upon high endeavour without grotesque misadventure: in gallant rescue he will descend a chimney, only to burn his buttocks. But it is equally true that the most grotesque of his hazards is fraught with moral significance. Even in the ridiculous fight with the giant bully we feel that just as Mr Polly screwed himself up to the prospect of self-immolation, so, at a pinch, will Charlie face and fight and dare if his mother-wit fail to shuffle him a way round; that, all alternatives lacking, he will go through hell for the Kid. And it is convenient for the

cinema-goer that hell is so easily translatable into scrambles over perilous roofs.

As for the child-actor who plays the Kid, I am in a quandary. Let precocity appear upon the stage and I am resolutely *distrait*. All juvenile prodigies, from the tiny ball of humanity tossed up on the feet of the Japanese tumbler down to Jackie Coogan, seem to me so many pathetic little monstrosities. They make me uncomfortable, shaming my elder wit. Master Coogan is the one actor about whom I am unable to make up my mind. I am in no doubt as to the effect which he produces; the difficulty is in the nature and source of his emotion. What reserves of feeling, must we suppose, lie behind those floods of tears of which he makes such infinitely pathetic show? The greatest actor in the world had not done more realistically. Are we to presume that at the tender age of six Master Coogan knows his Diderot, and feels nothing? Or that his emotion is real? If the latter, then there are depths in this small soul which frighten me. I fear lest, like Marjorie Fleming, the childish body prove too frail for so mature a spirit.

I know nothing of the soul of the elder actor. I do know that his most warped and twisted caricatures still retain some soul of humanity. Let me reproduce an incident which exactly illustrates what I have always felt about Chaplin. The scene was a Lancashire town, the characters a mob of rough youths joking and larking. They blocked the pavement. One saw approaching

a stunted, misshapen figure of deformity. With dread one waited for the jeers with which it seemed the hunchback must be received. Suddenly a youth cried out: "Hey, up; a chap!" and the cripple was given silent and respectful passage. Charlie, despite his oddities, is still "a chap." He belongs to humanity and will one day, like Lincoln, belong to the ages. To-day he is one of us. His queer sorrows, his queerer scrapes might well be ours. To meet his woes he arms his wistful soul, even as we do. He is too small for big battles; the *toga virilis* sits not well upon him. Indeed, it is not assumed. For when, at the end of the play, the Kid is received into sheltering arms, and Charlie is received too, we know which of the twain stands in the greater need of succour. *The Kid* is the best film Chaplin has made, and it looks as though he may be on the point of realising which way his finer genius lies. Happy the artist who, with his buffoonery and his pot-boiling days behind him, is at liberty to give us the best of his art. I know that many people look upon Charlie Chaplin as a figure frolicsome and free. "Hey, but he's doleful!" seems to me the more fitting note, and the one the artist will probably strike in the future. I see him at this juncture as Sir Joshua saw Garrick: a figure torn between rival mistresses, endeared to the softer, a shade apprehensive of the sterner Muse.

Heartbreak Shaw

FOUR hours of persistent button-holing at the Court Theatre convinced the dramatic critics that as a simple entertainment *Heartbreak House* was a failure. But what else it might be they did not try to find out. They hurled at the author the quite meaningless epithet of "Shavian"—as though it were his business to be Tchekovian or Dickensian or anybody-elsian except himself—and then ran away like children playing a game of "tick." What is there about Mr Shaw that he should break so many heads as well as hearts? In and out of season, from his preface-tops, he has proclaimed that he is no leisurely horticulturist, pottering about Nature's garden and pruning it into trim shapes. The tragedy and comedy of life, he has shouted, come from founding our institutions—and in these he certainly includes our plays—on half-satisfied passions instead of on a genuinely scientific natural history. Well, here is natural history preached with all the fury of the Salvationist. With Shaw fanaticism means the blind espousal of reason, a marriage which, in the theatre, turns out to be rather a joyless one. What, this disciple would ask, in comparison with truth and reason are such petty virtues as good playwriting, good manners and good taste? Truth, like everything else, is relative; and what is truth to the sentimental, loose-reasoning playgoer is not necessarily truth to the unsentimental, logical playwright. "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees." If a man can be partaker of God's theatre,

he shall likewise be partaker of God's rest, says Bacon. But if truth be the thing which Shaw will have most, rest is that which he will have not at all. If we will be partakers of Shaw's theatre we must be prepared to be partakers of his fierce unrest.

But then no thinker would ever desire to lay up any other reward. When Whitman writes: "I have said that the soul is not more than the body, And I have said that the body is not more than the soul, And nothing, not God, is greater to one than oneself is," we must either assent or dissent. Simply to cry out "Whitmanesque!" is no way out of the difficulty. When Ibsen writes a play to prove that building happy homes for happy human beings is not the highest peak of human endeavour, leaving us to find out what higher summit there may be, he intends us to use our brains. It is beside the point to cry out "How like Ibsen!" *Heartbreak House* is a restatement of these two themes. You have to get Ibsen thoroughly in mind if you are not to find the Zeppelin at the end of Shaw's play merely monstrous. It has already destroyed the people who achieve; it is to come again to lighten the talkers' darkness, and at the peril of all the happy homes in the neighbourhood. You will do well to keep Whitman in mind when you hear the old sea-captain bellowing with a thousand different intonations and qualities of emphasis: Be yourself, do not sleep. I do not mean, of course, that Shaw had these two themes actually in mind when

he set about this rather maundering, Tchekovian rhapsody. But they have long been part of his mental make-up, and he cannot escape them or their implications. The difficulty seems to be in the implications. Is a man to persist in being himself if that self run counter to God or the interests of parish, nation, the community at large? The characters in this play are nearer to apes and goats than to men and women. Shall they nevertheless persist in being themselves, or shall they pray to be Zeppelin-destroyed and born again? The tragedy of the women is the very ordinary one of having married the wrong man. But all these men—liars and humbugs, ineffectual, hysterical, neurasthenic—are wrong men. The play, in so far as it has a material plot, is an affair of grotesque and horrid accouplements. It is monstrous for the young girl to mate in any natural sense with a, superficially considered, rather disgusting old man. Shall she take him in the spirit as a spiritual mate? Shaw holds that she shall, and that in the theatre even spiritual truth shall prevail over formal prettiness.

It were easy to find a surface resemblance between *Heartbreak House* and *Crotchet Castle*, to transfer to our author the coat-of-arms Peacock found for his hero: "Crest, a crochet rampant; Arms, three empty bladders, turgescent." The fact that opinions are held with the whole force of belief prevents them from being crotchets. Nor would I agree to "bladders." You have seen those little carts piled with iridescent and splendiferous

balloons, some delicately moored, afloat in thin air. So this play of wooden plot and inflated symbol. The cart may plough through ruts or sink axle-deep in mud, the balloons are buoyant still. Rude urchins may fling dirt—the owner of the cart is not averse, when the mood takes him, from bespattering it himself—the balloons still soar or are made free of the ether. Their vendor is the old sea-captain, a hawker of ideals. As this world goes he is mad. With him we are to climb Solness's steeple all over again, to catch at "harps in the air." To ears not ghostly attuned he talks a jargon nigh to nonsense; yet through him booms the voice of that restless Force which is Shaw's conception of God. Happiness is the sleepy pear ripening to decay. This is pure Ibsen. So, too, is the hymn to appetite and rum, two things from which our author has held himself rigidly aloof. "It is not drunkenness so long as you do not drift; they are drunkards who sleep in their cabins, though they have but drunk of the waters of Jordan." I quote from memory. The old man, with his soul divinely loose about him, has something of the moral grandeur of Job, the intellectual stature of Isaiah. There is pathos in him. "I can't bear to be answered; it discourages me," is the plea of waning power. And still he talks, shunning, postponing severance from life, "seeking to ward off the last word ever so little . . . garrulous to the very last." I imagine this is the one portrait in all the long gallery which the author will "ever with pleas'd smile

keep on, ever and ever owning"—the one to which he, here and now, signing for soul and body, sets his name.

The play stands or falls exactly as we get or miss this spiritual hang. As an entertainment pure and simple it is dull and incoherent—even for Shaw. It has all the author's prolixities and perversities. It has the old fault of combining thinking on a high level with joking on a low one. There is the old confusion of planes. There is the plane upon which the old man and the young girl, spiritual adventurers both, after the manner of Solness and Hilda Wangel, are fitting spiritual mates; but there is also the plane upon which the girl says: "I am his white wife; he has a black one already." The play is full of the "tormented unreticence of the very pure." Spirituality chambers with lewdness revealed; beauty beds with nastiness, which any but the nicest mind had instinctively avoided. On all planes but the highest these people induce nausea. Throughout the evening Stevenson's "I say, Archer—my God, what women!" came to mind over and over again. "What a captain!" one said in ecstasy, but in the next breath, "What a crew!" This, however, was merely the expression of a predilection. Shaw is concerned with the salvation of all his characters. Nowhere in this play do I find him with his tongue in his cheek. I refuse to believe that his Zeppelin is an irrelevant joke, a device for waking his audience up. If I did not take the author to be perfectly

serious I should dismiss the play as a senile impertinence. I found it quite definitely exhilarating and deeply moving, and it therefore ranks for me among the great testaments. When I saw it at the Court Theatre it was admirably acted. For the old captain of Mr Brember Wills was magnificently distraught—Ibsen and Shaw, Whitman and General Booth rolled into one.

Scaramouch in Seven Dials

IT was pleasant to watch, at one of the theatres tucked away in Seven Dials, the little Ambassadors, where they gave Mr Barker's version of Guitry's *Deburau*, the old showman beat upon his drum. It was a change to hear the banjos rattle and the tambourines jing-jing-jingle in the hands not of a Shaw but of a Sacha. Cymbals, one hailed, not symbols. The curtain rose on the interior of a little French theatre of pantomime, and at once allusions to Hugo and Jules Janin, the resurrection of Marie Duplessis, fixed the date at 1840. It seemed to me that some of the figures in the dimly-discerned stage-audience were dummies. They were motionless, and whenever the living actors applauded, the heads of the dummies shook like barbers' blocks. This device, if device it were, induced a charming sense of the puppet show, disposed us admirably to the tragi-comedy of a clown. Deburau, vain as a child, greedy of praise, is a clown, and a clown of history; and an alleged intrigue with the famous Lady of the Camelias is the starting-point of the play. (How pat the playwrights are with their quasi-historical loves! Were our Mr Drinkwater Sacha—hypothesis demanding imagination—he would, on reflection that the centuries kiss and commingle, have doubtless inflamed Mary Stuart with a passion for Old Noll.) No purpose is served, nor, whilst memory of a great living actress holds, will ever be served by a re-statement of that first meeting of Armand and Marguerite. Guitry should have known that

between this remembrancer and the old play there falls a shadow, and that we are sick of an old passion. Deburau, abandoned of mistress and wife, sulks for seven years. Marguerite coming into his life again, babbling about the rudeness of the *père* Duval, who would keep his hat on in her drawing-room, he returns to the stage, only to be superseded by his son, to whom he reels off a never-ending version of Hamlet's advice to the players.

It was strange that *Deburau*, a play so undoubtedly of the theatre, should prove so dull of performance. There was much talk of love in it, in the French sense. In the English the word has some shade of stability; with Sacha it is the idiom for that riot of "pure love" of which the old soldier said the Egyptian coquette's passions were composed. He winds up his play almost exactly as Sarah used to bring down the curtain on the first meeting with Armand—a rapturous cry of "L'Amour!" This should have been very much to the sentimental English taste. Then again, the play is all about actors, for stories of whom we have a passion in our sober, collected way. That is why we devour, in the daily Press, the minuscule particularities of the theatre-gossips. There's such glamour doth hedge your actor, though it be formal and obvious as the daub on the cheek of the clown. I may know in my heart of hearts that Mr Ainley is not always toga'd and, at his club, condescends to tweeds, that Mr du Maurier, were he in real

life tied to a chair and revolver-threatened, might be a shade less than imperturbable. But I will never admit that my stage-heroes shall be less than heroic. That Frenchman libelled who wrote: "You admire the artist's convictions; he has none. You soar with him to some seventh heaven; he cocks an eye at your beatitude, and asks himself 'Am I indeed a god?'" Acting for me shall be a religion and the actor a disciple. Pierrot is the abstract and embodiment of all actors, hence the object of universal adoration. He is a figure after our English heart, though, alas! not the creation of English genius. We concede him to France to make up for her lack of an Ariel. But this is only because we did not happen to think of him. When we did, we conceived him as a little boy and made of him a play for little boys. After our shamefaced English way we leave Peter Pan in the nursery, whereas Pierrot is of the very stuff of life. If then, in the writings of certain of our countrymen, say Lamb, Stevenson and Barrie, we get near to Pierrot, it is rare that he colours our writers' lives. De Quincey, you say, and Dowson. Ah, but who then? Whereas the Villons, the Verlaines are Pierrot. No plain Englishman will, however, resist a pitiful story, though it take on an alien turn. Listen to this one. Seventy years ago, on a night of driving snow, a starving poet, one Gérard de Nerval, knocked at the door of a leprous and sinister house where his rags had often found shelter. There was no answer. He

knocked and knocked again but without avail. Darkness descending upon his soul, the poor wander-wit fastened a bootlace to the shutter and hanged himself. When they found him, his feet, which had gone so lightly upon earth, rested gently on the snow. This is Pierrot in his tragic aspect, and the nearest we English can show is the Fool on the Heath. Pierrot sentimental is Laforgue's, a jester moving broken-heartedly among such harsh realities as omnibuses, *métros*, umbrellas, warm-breathing mistresses whose hearts he breaks in turn because his passion is of the spirit only. Something after this fashion Jack Point. And when we reflect upon Pierrot dying delicately, laid exquisitely to rest in a lady's puff-box, we remember with pride that Beardsley was of our race.

Here, then, is a charming subject treated with less than the felicity of a Rostand but not unpoetically, beautifully, even provocatively staged, but which quite failed to move. The fault, I must think, lay entirely with the actor who was Pierrot. The part is immensely difficult. Sarah would always have been, would now and ever be, ineffable. So, too, in his medium, Chaplin, only you would have to give him leave to cry. On the English stage I can think only of Mr Leon Quartermaine, or possibly—on the strength of his beautiful performance in *Mary Rose*—and after much governance, Mr Thesiger. Our Seven Dials Scaramouch was Mr Robert Loraine, and this I take to be the reason of the

play's disappointment. As well had they chosen Mr McKinnel! Both are good actors in the sterling; you would not call them wistful or crepuscular. I was not to be persuaded that Mr Loraine was ever of the moon; rather did his solidity make ghosts of his companions. Not of plaster-of-Paris but good white stone, he stood four-square, possessed not of sensibility but of sense, not of a sprite but of a conscience. His white blouse was no shroud but a bricklayer's smock. He suggested a substantial bank-book, whereas Pierrot, at a pinch, should be capable of robbing a bank. As Des Grieux Mr Loraine was quite improbable; as a *gigolo*, to borrow a classicism of the Place Blanche, he was incredible. Never was it possible that this Deburau had lacked "bon souper, bon gîte, et le reste." Never had this Pierrot pleaded:

"Ma chandelle est morte, je n'ai plus de feu,
Ouvrez-moi la porte, pour l'amour de Dieu."

Never had you laid him to rest in a puff-box.

Miss Titheradge's Marguerite was charming, that artificiality which ruined her Desdemona standing her in good stead here. It was a very clever performance touched in with admirable understanding and malice. One wanted to take up and handle this Marguerite as though she were an ornament of the period. There was only one other figure besides Miss Titheradge which was genuinely 1840, and that was the female pander of Miss Beverly Sitgreaves. She

presented to the life Balzac's *marchande à la toilette,* which is by no means the same thing as the respectable English wardrobe dealer. The shape, make and atmosphere of these little French theatres was admirably reproduced, and very little, I imagine, was needed to make the play a success. But then many a Hamlet *manqué* had been a success if you could have changed the Prince of Denmark.

The Hound of Drinkwater

READER, do you know what a Repertory Theatre is? I do not mean the high-spirited venture which thirty years of Chelsea dilettantism have turned into the fashionable thing. I am thinking of Sloane Square's poorer sisters. Of one which recently, in the cold North, died of inanition, but, like the tramp in Richard Middleton's story, turns up ever and ever again. Whenever I muse of the theatre which Manchester miscalled the Gaiety, my mind harks back to repertory playgoing, so hardly distinguishable from religious observance. How devoutly one "sat under" Nonconformist producers, who have since reverted to the Established Church. How well one recalls the old stage-set which hardly ever changed. Against the wall, *R.*, a Welsh dresser, obviously rickety. *L.*, a heap of slag. *L.C.*, a smaller heap. Clinkers strewn here and there. On a chair *R.C.*, a repertory actress of exceeding melancholy. To her a sad young man makes moan: "The tide be a-wambling in!" In the mind's eye, from my seat in the dress-circle—heavens! how I used to hate that seat with its affected aloofness from contamination—I see serried rows and crescents of the meek, striving to pierce the intellectual gloom. None laughs lest he be thought to brawl in church. The play over, we disperse mistily. Faded wraiths, who in happier days had been vergers and apparitors, hand us our wraps. One or two of the congregation, palely loitering, remain to whisper of the play. Repertory hath them in thrall.

Alarums and Excursions

I confess to having acquired, in the theatre, something of second sight. Before the curtain rises I know instinctively into which of my pigeonholes a play will go. *Abraham Lincoln* went so definitely into the niche marked "Repertory" that, until this week, I had taken all legitimate steps to avoid seeing a stage representation of it. Of all the functions of art, moral uplift, Repertory's handmaid, is the one which least appeals to me. I am a sedulous eschewer of the works of Dr Brewer and Samuel Smiles, Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Mrs Humphry Ward. As soon as I have mastered the latest ritual of that sin which it is Sir Hall Caine's spiritual mission to deprecate, I lay that moralist down. Until last week I had not laid Mr Drinkwater down; I had forborne to take him up. His masterpiece had been hailed with an unctuous pæan, acclaimed "with a snaffling voyce" by the wrong people. By "the wrong people" I mean those who, mistaking Gladstone for a great spiritual force, insist that any play about him must necessarily be a great play. Since Lincoln was "unspeakably and for ever precious to Democracy," the stage-story of his life, it is implied, must rank as drama unspeakably and for ever precious. I do not know a more mischievous theory. I am frankly prejudiced against your stage-Gladstones, stage-Cromwells, stage-Lincolns. True that I liked *Pasteur*, but then "Sacha" treads the same idle pavement as myself. He is a *flaneur* held up momentarily by the chance encounter of a great man, whereas

"Mr Drinkwater" suggests not so much the saunterer as the pilgrim. There is Bunyan in the temperate name, as there is the boulevard in the crisp, familiar "Sacha." Yet it is not the spirit of Puritanism that I fear, but the spirit of proselytism, the risk of being "got at." I feel that the theatre which is in my blood is not the theatre of Mr Drinkwater, that my actors are not his actors nor my spectators his spectators, that the rogues and vagabonds who are to me the salt of the earth are to him only the dear material of reclamation, that he is out to save my soul. I had always felt that this play was a play such as they like in Manchester, a commemoration for which one does not dress.

Again there was that stumbling-block, America. What did I know of this vast and doubtless civilised country? A weary story of Columbus; the sentimental debauchery of Mrs Stowe; Jackson and Slavin; that negroid delicacy, the jazz; that well of English, the cinema-title; the hysteria of Los Angeles. Nearly all these things are unspeakable, but to me only the prize-fighters are precious. Why had not Mr Drinkwater written about a president assassinated nearer home? It was not until I read a condemnation of the play by a gentleman with whom I invariably disagree that I felt I must seek out the Scala Theatre for myself.

A scoffer, I met with the scoffer's reward. You may say that the theatre is not a tabernacle. I suggest that to misuse the theatre so is not to

profane it. "*Abraham Lincoln* is not a play." I suggest that it may be a very beautiful something else. Throughout the first act, the *local* and the characters, the thin, pawky atmosphere of this transatlantic Drumtochty, the dressed-up manikins masquerading as statesmen, their mouthing chief himself afforded, I admit, a chastened delight. Here was the New England Adam Bede, sententious, hortatory. And then quite suddenly I "got" Lincoln, in the way people "get" religion. It was no longer a question of liking or disliking. You do not like or dislike the story of the Flood, the Psalms of David, the character of St Paul. These things just are. So Lincoln became, and I am not yet free of him. This evangelist of the backwoods intruded himself, I hope quite momentarily, between me and the normal theatre, which suddenly seemed so much less worth while. In vain I fled him. I fled him down the labyrinthine ways of Goodge Street and the Tottenham Court Road; later, of my own mind. But in vain. Ever am I hunted of Lincoln, still am I hound of Drinkwater.

Such experiences as these show how much more comprehensive the theatre is than we are usually inclined to allow. Does it not come to this, that there are as many theatres as there are great minds? It is interesting to compare *Abraham Lincoln* with *The Burgomaster of Stilemonde*. This very skilful and theatrical little melodrama is hung by Maeterlinck on the Great War, just as the tear-compelling *Charles I.* was hung by Wills

on the Roundhead squabbles. A German officer has been killed during the occupation of a little Belgian town, and the German commandant gives the burgomaster the choice between giving up his innocent retainer to be shot or being shot himself. The theme is purely individual and sentimental; there is nothing here but the personal dilemma. Maeterlinck sings the ordinary man, the non-hero, the lover of seemliness and decency. He makes the point that this ordinary man has "a most attractive mind," and this fine thing is the highest of the play's philosophy. If you had tears for the burgomaster—and many had plenty when they saw Sir John's pathetic portrait, wistful, yet full of whimsey—you shed them there and then, and thought no more of the matter. At Lincoln's apotheosis you were dry-eyed. You did not react to the purely personal side of the drama; the issue was remoter, finer, of greater endurance. I do not know that I consider Mr William J. Rea to be a great actor; I do know that in him are shrivelled up what, but for his twin-spirit, Sir Frank Benson, would be all my notions about great acting. Both are bunglers and botchers in any way of detail; both present the faultless, incomparable whole. Mr Rea, as I saw him on that evening, is uncouthness personified, his lightest tone a dirge, his speeches anthems. He makes Lincoln talk of supper as of funeral baked meats. Some of his intonations, which do not appear assumed, make me uneasy about his Hamlet. Yet in this part

he satisfied me utterly. What dapperer actor could give rectitude so comfortable a habit? His gentleness with the bereaved mother and the boy is strictly of the theatre and within the compass of any purely emotional actor. What is outside theatricalism—and perhaps all the finer, though I will not dogmatise—is a natural spirituality, a glow of purpose and gift of healing. Contemplating Mr Rea, and through him Lincoln, you are further from base metal than is usual in the theatre. I have one little reservation to make; but whether Mr Rea or Mr Drinkwater or Lincoln himself be to blame, I am not quite sure. I found myself a little irked, once or twice, by a certain priggishness in the great man. There is a passage in Whitman in which the poet describes a meeting with the President. "His look, *though abstracted*, happened to be directed steadily in my eye. He bowed and smiled, but far beneath his smile I noticed the expression I have alluded to." Mr Rea has caught this wonderfully well. His Lincoln has a trick of spiritual withdrawal, of communing in another place, which is not a little irritating. That one acquits him of any possibility of pose only makes it worse. We do not care to be so patently reminded of our commoner clay. Does the President parade his moral uplift a shade too insistently? Is there a hint of spiritual snobbishness about him? I feel that no human being ever breathed with whom he had comfortably hobnobbed, unless it be Matthew Arnold. And even he, as we know, was not always "wholly serious."

A Point of Style

THERE were once two brothers, novelists both, who held lucidity to be not only the first but also the last virtue of their craft. Conceiving their plots overnight in a proper state of spiritual intoxication, they left their ordering till the morning, when, as Dick Phenyl would say, their lucidity was devilish. In the clear light of day they hammered out thought and expression to the tenuity of gold-beater's skin. The absence of style, they said, proclaimed the man. And so they rectified their well of English to the tastelessness of distilled water. Whether they wrote separately, as in *Babbling Brooks* and *Prattle,* or in collaboration, as in *Sancta Simplicitas,* there was the same careful smoothing away of individuality. I used to think they wore rubber gloves to obviate the possibility of even the tiniest finger-print. They liked words of one syllable. Was their limpidity threatened by an allusion too obscure, they gave chapter and verse. "Translucence," they said, in *Lambent yet Innocuous,* "is to us what King Charles's head (Charles I. of England, executed in Whitehall, Jan. 30th, 1649) was to Mr Dick (a character in *David Copperfield,* by Charles Dickens)." These a-complexionists came vividly to mind one day when I received a plaintive letter craving enlightenment about an article which I had contributed to a critical journal. "Who, o' God's name, is Mr Walkley? What do you mean by 'Crocitis'? Why do you put 'constellatory importance' in inverted commas?"

At once I realised that my correspondent was an actor, the illiteracy of "the profession" being one of my cherished beliefs. But then I am descended from a stage-player — one Edward Shuter, of whom the learned Mantzius writes: "He was exceedingly religious, a great drinker, and of a bottomless ignorance—he was barely able to read his parts and could not write at all; on the stage he had, when sober, a natural wit, and a certainty of touch in comedy, which elicited the highest admiration from the best judges of the period, Garrick for instance." I am not irked by this portrait of my forbear. "A natural wit when sober." This pleases me. Of Fleury, Samson writes that "he spoke as elegantly as a Marquis and spelled like a kitchen maid." I know of little evidence which would point to the possession by the modern actor of a greater degree of literacy. True that upon one occasion I sate (*imp.* of the verb *to sit.* Archaic.) next to an eminent romantic actor in the Tube, and noted that he accorded to his newspaper every appearance of intelligent perusal, holding it, moreover, the right way up. And then there are the extraordinary literary achievements of Mr Gerald du Maurier. The skill with which, in *Critics on Toast,* he has pinked his persecutors, amounts to genius. "The doctor's portentous bag was so dative and absolute. All through the thirteen acts that bag, that *vasta basketina,* seemed to focus the attention and *birker* one's vulgar curiosity." Art thou there, true-penny? Brilliant mole,

whose burrowings the vulgar find "deep," will you not cast prejudice aside and consent to this as the perfect pastiche? I can only account for such writing by supposing Mr du Maurier not to be an actor at all, but only the most percipient and witty creature that ever strayed on to the stage. I thank Heaven that a pedestrious style offers no target.

The point I would make is not that actors cannot write, which, after all, is not their business, but that they do not read, or, reading, find extraordinary difficulties. They may plead perhaps that they are too busy with original creation to bother about secondary penetrativeness of a hundred years ago. Very well then, I will leave the author of "constellatory importance" out of it. Do they read Mr Walkley? One of them does, as we have seen, but even he is a little perplexed by his author's excursiveness. He makes no allowance for cramped space. Lucidity, such as my two novelists possessed, requires a certain elbow-room; lacking that, the critic takes to the allusive-excursive as a kind of shorthand. Admirers of Mr Walkley have observed with regret a growing inability to shake off that old man of the sea, Benedetto Croce. "Crocitis" is an obvious logogram (Gr. λόγος word, + *gram. Cf.* Grammalogue.—Sir Isaac Pitman.) for this creeping infirmity. The commas which hinted at Lamb, and so greatly bothered my correspondent, are more complex. I remember surveying the alternatives of insertion and omission with equal

misgiving. If I left them out, "Unblushing thief!" might be said. If I put them in, I heard the reader's impatient "What, that old thing again!" And the charge turns out to be one of obscurity! Can it really be that the modern actor does not read what his betters have had to say of the great practitioners of his art? Sometimes I have the uncomfortable feeling that the critic is accused of "showing off." How far this is from the truth only those know who, in all humility, strain every nerve to be worthy of their readers. Mr Walkley stands in no such need. He can coruscate with any Macaroni or macaroni-eater of them all. It is excess of modesty which makes of him a borrower. Who, pray, is this foreign encroacher that he should burden the shoulders of our foremost critic, pluck him by the beard, tweak him by the nose, and come near to addling that reverend pate? There is, we are told, an art of quotation so subtle as to "put wise" your astute reader and leave the dense undisturbed by wink or nod. This has always seemed to me an inverted snobbishness, like offering your guest champagne out of pewter and pretending that it is the smallest of small beer. The truly modest critic is he who turns to his superiors as satellite to luminary. He is the humble frog who, when he goes a-wooing his reader, scrutinises and titivates his dress, takes his opera hat and prinks before his glass. Then, and then only, will he dive into the stream. He should sign "Anthony Rowley." An such a

critic put a friend into his mouth to supplement his lack of wit, to repair, belike, the "bottomless ignorance" of his inheritance, he is to be accused not of egotism but of ergotism. (Lat. *ergo*. Obs. —Sir Thomas Browne.) He recalls something said by Shakespeare or Lamb or Mr Walkley. Ergo, that something is the best, and he appropriates it. Were not these great ones appropriators too? Has none of them ever dipped into that *vasta basketina* which is Aristotle?

> If this be error and upon me proved,
> I never writ, nor no man's writing loved.

Finally, I would ask whether a certain turgidity of style may not, in the long run, pay the actor better than the uncompromising monosyllabic. Imagine my crystal-clear novelists in pursuit of, say, Mr du Maurier. "We al-ways like this ac-tor. He is very grace-ful. He has a fun-ny walk, but he has al-so nice ways." Were Anthony Rowley to write like this, the lily-white ducks who flop about the matinée-pond would, of a surety, gobble him up. Contrariwise, *elles ne le goberaient pas du tout.* Imagine my lucid brothers at grips with a wooden actor. Would they not say, "He is a stick"? How much more polite of them to use the botanist's "suffruticose"! Imagine them lucidly agape before that recent comedy in which Lady Tree pretended to be eighty-one. "At one mo-ment," I imagine them saying, "did this pret-ty la-dy look like Fair Ros-a-mund (mis-tress of Hen-ry II. of Eng-land,

1133-1189), at the next like Mis-tress Skew-ton (a char-ac-ter in *Dom-bey and Son*, by Charles Dick-ens). Her act-ing is thrown a-way on this play which is not fun-ny. It is choked with rub-bish. We do not like it." Whereas I, going about it and about—I must believe to the actor's greater satisfaction—had elaborated thus: "This play is costive of laughter[1]; I am tristitiated that acting of such humour should fail of deoppilation."

[1] Ben Jonson.

Hippocampelephantocamelos or the Function of the Red Nose in Melodrama

Your nose is your true red herring.
OLD WRITER.

THE old Greek who said that the function of Tragedy is to give the pleasure which arises from pity and terror, forgot to take into account those quite nice people who fail to get entertainment from the austere presentation of pitiful and terrible things. For these honest souls a form of drama has to be devised in which tragical things may be handled in an easier idiom. Simple folk like to check stage-happenings by their relation to personal experience, and clumsy articulation often stirs emotion which would be put off by a nicer exposition. Melodrama is a refining of tragic statement to a blunt exposition of the same theme in a manner of which a particular audience has experience. In mean streets Othello's rage is a commonplace phenomenon, and you will probably best persuade the jealous butcher at the corner not to throw away a pearl richer than all his stock, if you thumb-screw the local Iago into a fifth-act confession and restore the lady by artificial respiration. This may sound crude, but to many people life is a crude affair.

It is foolish to judge by æsthetic standards plays which have no æsthetic quality, but still more foolish to deny some power of hardy, thistle-like persistence to ineptitudes which have

taken root in the popular imagination. It is no reproach to the humblest evergreen to say that it flourishes all the year round; that is, in point of fact, its saving grace. The saving grace of melodrama is that it reiterates in and out of season that which popular audiences most wish to hear. In any play about Waterloo, Napoleon will asseverate unceasingly that the word "impossible" does not exist; Josephine, that humble love is the best, that first marriages are made in heaven and second ones on earth, and that not even a Buonaparte can outrage the law. Plays like *A Royal Divorce* have existed for donkeys' years, but so have donkeys; and the critic who lumps all mules and melodramas together writes him down an ass. A good melodrama is one which makes a whole-hearted appeal to the gallery; it risks failure if it cock one eye at the stalls. A good intellectual drama is one which plays successfully on the intelligence one associates, perhaps wrongly, with the boxes; if such a drama try to conciliate the gallery it will probably decline to pleasing the dress circle.

The theatre is a place in which people of all classes assemble in a body to witness a portrayal of emotions common to every member of that body. A theatrical audience is an indivisible whole, and not a conglomerate entity divisible into separate units. Let but a single member of that audience feel "out of it," and the play is not a masterpiece of the highest order. The

greatest plays are not those which have been written for the judicious with some added frippery to please the groundlings; they are written fundamentally to delight the plain man, with a superstructure of elegance and elaboration to gratify the elect. *A Royal Divorce* is not a work of high art, *The Master Builder* is; but I have little doubt which contains the better theme for theatrical exposition, and none at all as to which Shakespeare would have chosen.

To the elder Irving melodrama was child's play and he took a child's delight in it. The torrent of his passion would sweep away like pebbles improbabilities which to a mere intellectual had been veritable boulders. It was from the dross of melodrama rather than the gold of tragedy that this actor fashioned his most grotesque and terrible figures. Cast the mind back to *The Lyons Mail*, the silencing of the stable-boy by the simple method of hitting him on the head with a bucket, the rifling of the mail-bags after the manner of a hungry beast, the tigerish petting and mauling of the confederates, the sheer animalism of Dubosc, the drumming with his boots as he lay on the garret floor — and remember how all this was done with such tremendous gusto as to carry the audience beyond any power of resistance or the desire to examine the method of fascination. To be sure, no calculation was ever made as to the number of pennyworths of intellect expended in the display. It was Irving's temperament

and not his intellect which stood the racket. It is instructive to compare his performance with that of the son in the same part, from which temperament was almost entirely absent. The younger Irving played Dubosc with his intellect, and with his intellect alone. You were interested where, in earlier days, you had been enthralled. You felt that the actor was hampered by too exact a knowledge of the psychology of murder, and by a desire to go beyond the melodramatic scope. He hankered after a villain with some subtlety about him—a denizen of Victor Hugo's third sub-stage, a Lacenaire whiling away the interval of waiting for his victim with Rousseau's *Social Contract.* In his study of French criminals H. B. Irving writes of one "whose face was that of a Mephistopheles with the light of hell gone out of it." In the face of the older actor the light of hell blazed ever romantically; the mask of the younger was all hooded malevolence.

"Tout droit dans son armure, un grand homme de pierre
Se tenait à la barre et coupait le flot noir;
Mais le calme héros, courbé sur sa rapière,
Regardait le sillage et ne daignait rien voir."

That is the younger Irving. It is not possible to imagine the old man calm, bent over his rapier, wrapped in tragic contemplation. He would have cried Havoc! and fought to the last inch of his steel.

Hippocampelephantocamelos

For melodrama to succeed there are two prime conditions. The first, which I have already laid down, is that it shall deal simply with simple things; the second, which I now postulate, is that it shall have comic as well as serious attributes, and deal broadly in the stuff of simple humour. Popular audiences are insensible to wrong notes. Scenes may be played in two or more keys simultaneously, but so long as all the incidents lie within common experience the audience will not be distressed. It is even essential that familiar tears and familiar fooling shall tread upon each other's heels. The superiority of the dress-circle attitude towards the red-nosed comedian is due to the fact that he jokes about subjects which do not come within the dress circle's experience. Very different, I imagine, would be the attitude if he made fun of things that touch it nearly—the desire for keeping up appearances, the wearing of opera-hats in the Tube. The fun of melodrama has just this vital aspect. Strong drink is the admitted provoker of red noses; the pawnshop is as familiar as the public-house; if your mother-in-law is a nuisance the whole street is ready to take sides. And therefore red noses, the pawn-shop and mothers-in-law are the legitimate material of melodrama.

The Bells, The Lyons Mail, Charles I., Louis XI.,—all these fine old plays could get along by sheer force of horror when there was an actor of genius to hold them together. But in these punier times the red nose is a *sine qua non.* I

seem to remember some very rollicking moments in plays of the type of *The Sign of the Cross*, a front scene or two of bibulous humours whilst the arena set was being prepared behind, and arrangements made to ensure a sufficiency of Christians. The device, if you remember, was not scorned in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Of quite recent melodramas only those have had considerable runs which have provided for the broad laugh as well as for the easy tear.

By "laughter" I mean an alternative to weeping. The actual guffaw is the best, but any form of relief will do. In *Chu Chin Chow* a display of mannequins of which Mr Selfridge might be proud; in *The Garden of Allah* an irrelevant desert, complete with sand-storm and camels; in *The Wandering Jew* a mysticism of the servants' hall; in *The Blue Lagoon* a bunch of naked little legs and arms, baby prattle and an old sea-dog *à la* Masterman Ready. In all these plays the audience is afforded a further delight in the fond delusion that in addition to their evening out they are improving their minds. Whereas mannequins, sand-storms, religiosity, pink limbs and mind-cultivation are all our old friend, the red nose, in different guise. Which is very cunning on the part of authors and producers. Now let us see what has befallen one or two other plays according as they possessed or lacked this second essential quality.

Some time ago I spent a week-end in the little seaside town in which Henry James's *The*

American was first submitted to an audience of butter merchants, lodging-house keepers, shop assistants, clerks—an average audience of average education. We know how this play failed. But this little town has a pier, and that pier has a pavilion, and on that pier and in that pavilion I saw a similar audience completely carried away by a play which that great author could not have found words to condemn.

It was about the war, and nothing but the war—its material the tracking down of German spies, escapes from German prison camps, the return to dying sweethearts of lovers given up for lost. There was not a stock figure missing. The dashing soldier, the heroine artless to imbecility, the German bully, the home traitor or snake in the grass. He who played the hero was the author of the piece. Not in London of recent years have I seen an actor so completely in the throes of an authentic passion. I am not here concerned with the "paradox of the comedian"; I recount what the actor persuaded the audience that he felt. They were made to say: This fellow *has seen* and must make us see the wounded and the dying. Now if the shop assistants and hotel clerks who had themselves been soldiers had suspected playwright or actor of trifling, of giving them an insincere grain of this emotion and make-believe drop of that, they would not have been moved to the extent they were. But that the actor-author had made war the burning matter of his play was not the reason

why it was deliriously acclaimed. For that the credit belonged entirely to the love passages between a Rabelaisian maid-of-all-work and the soldiers billeted on her master. These amours were my red nose. The play was a huge success.

London had a chance of welcoming great acting when *Time to Wake Up* was presented at a series of matinées. This little play never went into the evening bill; I had to follow it to Croydon. In it that tender actress, Miss Clare Greet, lavished the full measure of her pathos, her sincerity, her common sense. She filled the squat, dumpy figure of the Cockney mother with the utmost beauty. When she entered the hospital ward where her son lay, her attitude was compact of trepidation and heroic cheer. She stood framed in the doorway a-quiver with maternity, a bunched "body" of a woman, sublime as Andromache. And yet for want of a red nose this play failed.

The author of *The Ninth Earl* knows his theatre audience even better than he knows his theatre. The ticklish part in devising a play in which the hero is a convict of fifteen years' standing is to make sure that the convict shall be thoroughly acceptable to both stalls and gallery. Now if there were any likelihood of the stalls taking an interest in a felon who has become a convict in the ordinary way of business, and being moved by consideration of the brutalising effect of prison life upon such a man, there

would have been no need for this play; a revival of Mr Galsworthy's *Justice* would have done. But the stalls are not so interested; to arouse their emotions the convict must be a nobleman of strictly non-criminal caste, the victim of a momentary impulse of passion. This is rank snobbery, if you like; but then there is no evidence that the people who occupy the stalls are not for the greater part rank snobs. Not quite such snobs, perhaps, as the poor folk up in the gallery, who dearly love a lord and who hate to "demean themselves" by contemplation of their own class in trouble. It has been claimed that for a convict to be of noble birth gives a particular turn to a common tragedy. Even if the point be that the amenities of prison life are less tolerable to a lord than to a labourer, it is nevertheless a snobbish one. All the more reason why the play should have been a tremendous success.

It must be heart-rending for the stalls to contemplate an earl who has so far forgotten his manners as to take a chop-bone in his fingers; but be sure that the sight provoked from the gallery a groan of even deeper anguish. That we are one flesh and one blood is so much nonsense. I have no doubt that many of those in the gallery who were most deeply afflicted at this degradation of the mutton chop remembered how in the early days of the war they had ladled out their porridge with their bare palms quite as a matter of course. That one of their class should, through

poverty, forego the use of spoons, or, through prison administration, have forgotten that use, would not be deemed by them matter for a play. An earl is a horse of another colour. "Reminded me of 'ome—it was so bloody different!" said the old lag on his release from gaol, and the remark more or less sums up the mental attitude of the gallery towards a noble earl. They and he are different. I saw the first act of the play from the stalls, and since a play is not to be judged from the best seats alone, climbed the stairs into the gallery for the remainder. It was a shock to find that in the higher latitude the audience obviously numbered more earls than convicts amongst their acquaintance, and so all theories as to plays about convicts for the convict class must remain theories.[1] But that is not my present point. From the roof this particular melodrama seemed rather less real than it did from the ground floor. Seen in elevation, the premises were steep. But the stairs were steeper, and one got the whole story spread beneath in improbable plan. Perhaps it takes a superhuman actor to convince the gallery-boy with the top of his head and the tips of his boots. When the actors came down to the footlights nothing of them but their extremities was visible; when they retreated up-stage a back-cloth cut off all but the last button of their waistcoats. Mr

[1] I am aware that the galleries of West End theatres are not composed of ex-convicts. It is probable, however, that the majority of ex-convicts, on the rare occasions when they do treat themselves to a West End theatre, do not patronise the stalls.

Norman McKinnel is so good an actor, however, that he suffered little by this foreshortening; even a knee-length of him was thrilling. He was very pathetic in his presentation of a brain fallen into long disuse. His portrait of a poor soul bereft of every faculty save bare humanity roused the audience to tragic questionings and justifications, whereas the perseverant young woman, who for fifteen years had kept up an unanswered correspondence, reminded us once more that in this sort of entertainment heart-searchings and justifications are a mistake. The play was good without being good enough; or bad without being bad enough. It was a compromise between *John Gabriel Borkman* and *The Ticket of Leave Man* and it failed. The author forgot about the red nose.

Neither gallery nor boxes are proof against the lure of Red Indian and cowboy. To be of a despised breed, to own Lone Wolf for father and Laughing Water for mother, to be free as wind over the prairie and suffer contumely only in contact with the low-class white, to hold up fourteen armed dagos with your single revolver, to be lassoed and strangled, sentenced to death and rescued in the nick of time by a devoted horse, to despise the wiles of a Spanish light-o'-love, to cherish a modest violet whom you vow not to marry until her father shall come hat in hand, which he does at about eleven-thirty, on discovery that you are no Redskin but a white brave and a non-criminal earl to boot—there is

deep delight in all this. Such a rôle is laid out for the actor as gratefully as an *aria* of Handel for the voice. Enormous technical demands are enormously repaid. Good, straightforward melodramatic acting carries money-lender's interest. Brains are not required to surmount intellectual difficulties or make the crooked straight. The actor sees the plain thing before him, sees it and does it. F-i, fi, e-r, er ; fire : p-i-s-t, pist ; o-l, ol ; pistol. Fire pistol. Go and do it—as Mr Squeers might have said. Mr Philip Yale Drew, the cowboy actor in *The Savage and the Woman* at the Lyceum, was more than competent. He looked virile and could throw off a "mad-scene" like a prima donna. He showed himself a master of cadenza. He was not afraid of posturing. At the end of an act half-a-hundred revolvers would bore half-a-hundred holes through his ribs, and in the next he would come up with nothing but a bandage round his forehead and a smile. Mr Drew was the noble savage to the life and could have had my scalp for the asking. But what made the play a success was not this fine part finely acted, but the presence of zany and pantaloon. The romantic passages and the scenes between these two lunatic fools alternated as regularly as the inspiration and exhalation of the breath. Zany was a Chinaman who knew no American and broke glass inopportunely ; pantaloon was solely ventripotent. His virtue was in his belly ; which is our friend the red nose all over again.

Hippocampelephantocamelos

We have heard ad nauseam that tragedy moves through pity and terror; it is not so generally recognised that melodrama functions through pity and fun. A wit once derived "gramophone" from two Greek words—*gramos,* "I speak"; *phonos,* "through a tin tube." I am inclined to derive "melodrama" from *dramos,* "I wring your hearts," and *melos,* "by means of my red nose."

For the Purposes of Revenue

A Review of some Commercial Productions

The works of most modern authors, like dead-born children, cannot be murdered. It is such wretched, half-begotten, half-writ, lifeless, spiritless, low, grovelling stuff, that I almost pity the actor who is obliged to get it by heart.

The town, like a peevish child, knows not what it desires, and is always best pleased with a rattle.

Joseph Andrews.

ONE Night in Rome.—Miss Laurette Taylor should be impeached for having won our loves by incomplete pretence, or in the alternative, for concealment of the art which is within her. In *Peg o' My Heart* this golden little lady conquered every bosom of the town, by as flat sorcery as ever was committed had sentimental London at her feet. To chide her had been unkind, to praise her impertinent. Either you were ensnared or you weren't, and in neither case was it the affair of the critic. In *One Night in Rome* Miss Taylor tries for something more than a success of endearment, in which she very nearly succeeds in spite of a darkened stage, a darkened head of hair, a sombre Italian accent, a darkling apparatus of bamboozledom, and the obligation to croak at intervals a raven-like "*Che sarà, sarà.*" What will be, will be indeed. It may be that this actress is about to achieve greatness. There were many moments when she knocked at the door of great acting only to find it locked and barred by a baffling and exasperating play. Imagine *Hamlet* without the Ghost, the Dane peevish, and the audience ignorant of the cause of his fretting. Imagine

him dispatching Claudius, and after the poison has got to work hastily throwing off the whole story, beginning with "Sleeping within mine orchard."

Conceive all this, and you have some idea of the handicap which Mr Hartley Manners imposes on his heroine. For three sad hours was Miss Taylor condemned to bat-like and Sybilline mystification. But they seemed not an hour, so skilfully did she beguile the time in pretending to be other than her natural self. Wave after wave of mystification buffeted us about until at last the dam burst and the waters of explication were let loose. And what a flood it was—the matter of Ibsen and the manner of Catulle Mendès! The actress's art, which had battled so bravely in the tumbling waters, foundered here. She had not a sufficiency of tragic command; she "ran on" as they say; she reeled off the farrago of absurdity as though she mistrusted it. "Reeled off"—that's the phrase. Mr Manners has written an excellent drama for the screen. "L'Enigme," the palmist's pseudonym, strikes the very note in the way of titles; it makes thick the blood, is the veil for such innocency presently to be revealed as was never seen even in American backwoods. One night in Rome! Think of the extraneous possibilities. Think of the views of the old place, the turbulent Tiber, crowded Colosseum, and "a glimpse of the distant Parthenon." Since we are told of the suicide of "L'Enigme's" husband that at Milan they turned it into a play and at Paris into a

novel, imagine the crowds, carnivals, and hulla-baloos at the opera! Think of the sub-titles, *Che sarà, sarà*! *Lasciate ogni speranza*, and all the other old tags! Think of the "close-up" when the dam finally gives way, the present dissolving into the familiar dream-past! Let Mr Manners translate this *chef d'œuvre manqué* into its proper sphere and "release" Miss Taylor for material worthier of what she has now shown to be her scope. I am inclined to think that the actress could invest a lump of reinforced concrete with charm. Who that only knew her as Peg would have credited her with such an achievement as her broken English? Essays of our native actor in that line bear chiefly witness to his being "a Cockney in 'is 'eart." Miss Taylor did not content herself with mere verbal derangements; she phrased as a foreigner phrases, endowed an English form of words with alien rhythm. Her pronunciation was nearly perfect, her intonation magnificently at sea. It was hardly the actress's fault that the break-neck confession failed to come off. No artist could have weathered such an enormity in pathetic circumstance as "He was not in financial difficulties." It was as though Hamlet were expiringly to say: "The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit, but remember, Horatio, my uncle was fully able to meet his liabilities."

A Southern Maid.—"All literature is good literature, except the tedious." But with the

rapturous success of *A Southern Maid* before him I imagine Voltaire had included the tedious. Some parts of this play are dull, others are duller. The book is the very funeral of wit. "A good wit will make use of anything; I will turn diseases to commodity," roared Falstaff, and I think he might have made something of that modern ailment, musical comedy. The wit of Messrs Dion Clayton Calthrop and Harry Graham scarcely fuses to flame; singly each shows a bright little spark, together they gutter like a candle. They burden themselves with a plot which, like the body of Sir John, is "blasted with antiquity." They seek to enliven the old thing with one Francesco del Fuego. This new Pistol swears by "socks and submarines, macaroni and mudguards, dogs' teeth and dynasties." These are bitter words, but the trouble is that they are not particularly funny. All the world knows that wit consists in finding striking and unexpected resemblances in things widely different. But the meanest member of the audience can see the difference between socks and submarines, and the resemblance in which lies the wit of coupling them together is far to seek. As between the present play and its predecessor, *The Maid of the Mountains*, there is plenty of resemblance but no essential difference. This time the management has co-opted Mr Oscar Asche, and hence it is that in Santiago as in Bagdad gold fins wink in porphyry fonts, fire-flies waken and

milk-white peacocks droop like glimmering ghosts. Only this particular peacock happens to be a donkey. These Southern maids are fair in the fearless old fashion, and Miss José Collins gives us as much of the Tuscan and Greek as could be considered good form in this chillsome island. She realises the preposterousness of her part too nicely to be serious over such matters as the slaying of a sweetheart. And therefore she says: "And so I am to kill him" with exactly the emotion she would have used for "And so I am to pick his pockets." She is gorgeously caparisoned and so stupendously made-up that it is difficult to tell what her dramatic range may be. There is hardly anybody else in the play. The comedians were like that French actor who, after being awarded the first prize for comedy at the Théâtre Français, retired to make his fortune in the *pompes funèbres*. Delete Miss Collins and you unpeople Daly's.

"The stalls sit purring like a catshow charmed,
With extra cream or chin adroitly scratched;
And women from the boxes lean and listen
Like cows across a gate at milking-time"

wrote Davidson. Surely an admirable picture of this house!

A Marriage of Convenience.—Like that American critic who said with reference to *Hamlet* that he did not care for the imported drama,

I do not care for adaptations. At least, not for some recent ones. First Miss Marie Löhr with that spindle-shanked French antique, *A Marriage of Convenience.* What a plot! Who can imagine an audience caring whether Candale and his noble goose are happy or miserable? Consider the quality of the wit! "You're always buzzing about!" exclaims the Chevalier de Valclos with characteristic 1750 elegance. "I am terribly inquisitive," said the Countess. "That is to say that you are a woman," replies the Chevalier. Nobody could have made much more of the little ninny than did Miss Löhr. But neither could anybody have made much less. Mr Faber faded to nothingness as Candale and Mr Dawson Milward contented himself with looking like Le Roi Soleil after eating one of Alice's biscuits. But my heart went out unreservedly to Mr Lauri de Frece, with his George Alexander cast of countenance and the Robeyish break in the voice. He was the only live person in the play. And why did everybody pronounce the word "cerise" as though it were written "cerisse"? Dressmakers and jockeys may have a pronunciation of their own, but they do not constitute an academy.

The Mystery of the Yellow Room.—Next, Miss Daisy Markham with a tame version of a French detective story. There is in *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* an intolerable deal of complication to a very poor halfpennyworth of solution. Lord,

what tangled webs these playwrights weave, when first they practise to deceive! What knots they tie everybody up in, themselves included! Mr Hannaford Bennett invokes a familiar apparatus of blasts from hell and goblins damned, whinings and whimperings in comparison with which banshees and werewolves pale their ineffectual howls. But these are ghosts which may be laid with a revolver, and their other-worldly manifestations are explained away as signals. But what particular need a single-handed villain has to signal to himself is not clear. He collapses in a trial scene again reminiscent of Alice. There had been a room without means of exit and a man supposed to be shut up in it, which all the time he wasn't. For when they got there the cupboard was bare.

"You could not see a cloud, because
No cloud was in the sky;
No birds were flying overhead—
There were no birds to fly"

wrote Lewis Carrol. So in this play

"The littlest lark that soars above
No cage had here espied;
And locks and bars are foolishness—
When Dickey's not inside."

Georges Sand.—After Miss Markham, Mrs Patrick Campbell in an American play. If I am angry with this lady's performance in *Georges Sand* it is with the anger of idolatry which hurts the

idolater more than it wounds the idol. I will not look unprotestingly on whilst she who might be the greatest English actress of the present day makes a mockery of herself, gores her own thoughts, holds cheap that art which others have held most dear. I have no objection to the wearing of trousers and the smoking of cigars on the part of Georges Sand, the actress who shall impersonate her, or any other woman. All that can be said about these things is that they do not matter. That not undiscerning writer, Balzac, wrote a novel about the lady without mention of these insignificant details. But he recounts how she boasted of having finished a novel at four o'clock in the morning. "And what, pray, did you do then, madam?" "I began another," replied the indefatigable, humourless scribe. Georges Sand had any amount of romantic passion and genius, but she could be flat-footed and wearisome. Balzac, whom she bored, yet recognised her great spirit, and wrote of her with respect untouched with irony.

And here comes Mr Moeller with his tongue not even in his cheek, but rudely protuberant. History records of his heroine that she was taciturnity itself and would sit for hours together without a word, devouring her lovers with her sad and sombre eyes. Mr Moeller makes her talk. Heavens, how she talks! Spates, torrents, floodgates, there is no simile which shall fit the trivial, pseudo-heroic gabble. She takes notes from her outpourings as shamelessly as a modern

journalist. A phrase strikes her—some *cliché* about sunburnt cathedrals or music wooing the stars—and meet it is she sets it down. And this she does fifty times. History records that the novelist was for a period on the staff of the *Figaro*, but that as she had neither wit nor piquancy her earnings at the end of the month did not amount to more than fifteen francs. But the Georges Sand of this play is a gossip to the manner born. She could have turned out her column of chit-chat twice a day. She would not have been racy but cheap, not witty but smart, not wise but knowing, and would have made our best paragraphists look to their laurels. And then her lovers! Musset has a scene of eavesdropping which recalls Mr Pickwick's adventure at Ipswich with the middle-aged lady in the curl-papers. Pagello is a dolt, Heine a boor, Liszt a marionette, Chopin a walking tubercle. What kindness did Jules Sandeau and Prosper Mérimée to Mr Moeller's ancestors that they are spared?

Into this welter of nonsense comes Mrs Patrick Campbell like some Spanish galleon in full sail. Without her the play had been unthinkable; with her it is amusing, but at what cost! Not even so bitter a wit as hers can parody the merely futile. Wit must have matter, and so she rends and mauls herself, her personality, her art. She consents to a costume which might have been worn by Little Lord Fauntleroy or Archibald Grosvenor. She passes in the same breath from

the hysteria of the *exaltée* to solicitude for her second-best trousers. She will catch you with her unerring beauty and kill your admiration with a phrase. There were the old turns of the head, the familiar sweep of the rounded throat, the old extravagance of haunting gesture, arresting line, ineffable pose. There were the old tones of pleading and resentment, the sweet that almost bitter is, the aching loveliness, and all in the service of derision. The most tragic thing in the world, says Mr Shaw somewhere, is a man of genius who is not also a man of honour. But I must think that an even more tragic thing is an actress of genius who makes a mock of her art.

Tiger! Tiger!—Now comes Mr Bourchier with another American drama. *Tiger! Tiger!* is rank with the snobbishness of a republican country. The "tiger" is that passion which ravages a man for two years and a half, but ceases to tease him when its object turns out to be a domestic servant. Can he who made the Member of Parliament also make the cook? There was no getting away from the fact that Sally was a cook. As a maid she thought like a cook, talked like a cook, and looked like a cook; as mistress to the M.P. she could not put away cookish things. Tiger, said Fielding, can make a molehill appear as a mountain, a jews' harp sound like a trumpet, and a daisy smell like a violet. But in Mr Knoblock's play this tiger noses the smell of cabbage under the scent of patchouli. It is a

very dreadful and common play. When the M.P. discovers that his mistress is a cook he discovers something that is not of the slightest importance. That she should have a cook's mind is the thing that matters. Suppose the girl had a fine spirit in a cook's body. Suppose the hero had continued to love her, well knowing her to be a cook. Suppose that being an M.P., and therefore presumably a man of some education, he had looked up *The New Machiavelli* for the proper moves in the "world well lost" gambit for statesmen. Suppose he had sacrificed his career for her. Suppose anything you like, but do not suppose that we can take kindly to a hero when it turns out that it is he who has a kitchen mind. Miss Kyrle Bellew's Sally was a depressing performance. The actress conceived the cook as a rapt and rather dull Madonna, and she was careful to write nothing on a mystical and woebegone countenance. Miss Bellew hardly addressed a single word to anybody on the stage throughout the whole evening. She stood four-square to the audience, and even her replies to her lover were addressed to them. That good actor, Mr Leon Quartermaine, played the poltroon according to his deserts, and Miss Stella Mervyn-Campbell gave chastity a more haggard, chillsome and forbidding air than even that cold virtue calls for.

Fédora.—*Fédora* is yet another hoary adaptation. It is difficult to understand the intellectual's

stern dislike of the well-made play. All the world's best plays have been well made, even if *Hamlet* seems at first sight untidy and sprawling like some overgrown cathedral. Architecture in the theatre calls for genius, whilst even carpentry demands talent; and perhaps what really puts clever people's backs up is the amount of talent they conceive as running to waste when an author like Sardou, with nothing to say, says it supremely well. The second count in the indictment is to the effect that the thing is theatrical. From which it follows that plays written for the theatre should be badly written and non-theatrical. A Chestertonian proposition with which not even Mr Chesterton would agree. What the intellectual folk are after is that plays shall concern themselves with real people, and the theatre, if need be, go hang. As a moderate and temperate critic I disagree with the utmost violence. The first condition of a play is that it shall be a thing of the theatre. To be a great play it must deal with real people, but conversely if it deals with real people and is not theatrical it won't be a play at all.

Modern playwriting may be divided in order of virtue into four categories. (*a*) The theatrical play about real people. Let me roughly instance *Hedda Gabler, Monna Vanna, La Gioconda, La Vierge Folle, The Cherry Orchard, Magda, Iris, Riders to the Sea, Mary Broome, Strife, The Widowing of Mrs Holroyd*, and four-fifths of *The Doctor's Dilemma*. (*b*) The theatrical play

about unreal people. See *Fédora*. (*c*) The non-theatrical play about real people, of which *Man and Superman* is a supreme example. (*d*) The non-theatrical play about unreal people. For this see any London theatre addicted to light comedy or the Repertory Theatres when they unbend. Now note how high up *Fédora* is on such a list.

Unfortunately the fact that *Fédora* is a good play is no reason why Miss Marie Löhr should have tackled it. Even if we forget another personality, we cannot pretend that tragic, or melodramatic, or any extravagant power of emotion whatever exists in Miss Löhr. In the great actors what is called power is merely a small cheque drawn upon an inexhaustible balance. Power is merely the manifestation of the volcano and not the volcano itself, the surface-swell and not the sea. Salvini, at his most tremendous, was never so terrible as you felt he might easily become. Whereas Miss Löhr goes all out, and in so doing squanders the storm. She has no reserves, and we perceive that all along there has been nothing to reserve. It is not that the performance is not clever. It is, and that's the pity of it. It is a pity to see a charming young lady, whose talent is as English as a rectory lawn, attempt the ebullitions of a foreign virago—and Fédora wasn't more than that. It is vain for Rydal Water to try to lash itself into an imitation of the big ocean. It is a pity to see that round, smiling, childish face distorted, oh so cleverly and meaninglessly distorted,

the mouth pulled this way and that, in strenuous imitation of what the great actors do in their authentic passion. "She's so bright!" says the Countess Olga, of Fédora. And no better criticism of Miss Löhr's definitely pleasant talent has ever been devised. Miss Ellis Jeffreys has much of Mrs Kendal's quality of Victorian staidness, with an embroidery of gaiety which is her own, and perfectly English. She an artist of understanding, accomplishes exactly what she sets out to accomplish, and is one of the few actresses left to us who can play a woman of breeding. Mr Allan Aynesworth is altogether jolly as a bluff and breezy de Siriex from the shires, and Mr Basil Rathbone's Ipanoff would be perfectly at home on the centre court at Wimbledon or reading for the Bar. Even Tree was better. But there, these nice English people can't expect to become nasty Russians merely by pulling faces.

The Garden of Allah.—Mr Robert Hichens is to be congratulated upon having got the feel of the sand across the footlights. *The Garden of Allah* very nearly comes off, there being nothing between it and success except the desert. The *divertissement* in the middle very nearly comes off too, there being nothing between it and triumph except the play. But was there not once a French critic who wrote after the first performance of Goethe's *Egmont*: "Musique de Beethoven. Hélas! Pourquoi y en-a-t-il si

peu!" Why such niggardly fauna? Could not Mr Collins do better than mules (2), donkeys (5), goats (7), sheep (4), camels (3), calf at foot (1), horses (2), gazelle (1 dead)? Strange that producers will not realise that on the stage nothing is so unreal as the real. There is a fall of real water in *The Garden of Allah*, but all its effect is to annoy like an unruly bathroom tap. The thing which ruins the play in the dramatic sense—and makes it in the commercial—is the importunate desert, sucking up action and interest like some gigantic piece of blotting-paper.

There is one glory of verse and another of prose, but I am reluctant to think that there is yet a third of camels. These ever-recurring ruminants, with their obstructive habitat, did too much damage to too good a play. For *The Garden of Allah* is not entirely a foolish play. It has a theme, the sort of theme a French dramatist will hammer to a conclusion without the aid of any menagerie, but by means of four actors, four chairs, a four-square argument and four hours by the clock. Is it reasonable, such a dramatist will ask, to demand of a full-blooded human being that he become a monk? And the monk having discovered his moral and physical incompatibility, is there any conceivable use in his remaining a monk? And when he has broken barracks and is to become a father, is any religious end served by re-immuring him and leaving the young woman in the lurch? Is there any Christian sense in this letch for chastity?

Half of the Frenchman's audience will say "Yes" and the other half will say "No." And this it is which makes for a fine, clashing play of the theatre.

But do not imagine that Mr Hichens puts his case as cold-bloodedly as this. Do not imagine that he puts it at all. True that he makes his young man terrifically rehearse the greater part of the temptations of St Anthony. True that he makes him explain with much circumstance that man was not meant to live alone. But he shrouds his characters in portentousness, in a beating about the bush unexampled in my recollection, in a complete inability to see an inch before their noses. The intellectual interest of the drama is contained in the question: "What should the monk do?" But the whole interest of the spectator lies in wondering how much longer the stupid people on the stage are going to take to find out that the man of mystery is a monk. They are an unconscionable time "tumbling," as the phrase goes. It had long been obvious to the spectator that the picturesque Russian must be an escaped Trappist; he looked too like a miner on strike to be anything else. Only an escaped Trappist would say: "I want to stretch my limbs and get a shot if I can," in the same tone in which he would read the Burial Service over his Abbot. Would any but a renegade monk imagine a woman like Miss Titheradge capable of putting up for life with an oasis, a diet of dates, and a stud of camels how numerous and charming

soever? It is only fair to say that the audience brought to this play of religiosity the ecstasy of a Revivalist orgy. They succeeded, as Hazlitt says, "in gaining a vertigo by the abandonment of their reason."

The only two parts that matter are Mr Godfrey Tearle's and Miss Madge Titheradge's. Listen to the rise and fall of Mr Tearle's beautiful voice, watch the nobility of his gestures, and you see a fine actor in the making. Miss Titheradge used her exquisite voice exquisitely and listened admirably. How spiritedly they both got off the mark and, jumping straight into their strides, would hardly let each other speak for more than twenty minutes without interruption! The camels were coming, alas! alas! and they were anxious to get their human say in whilst human speech remained of interest. But the camels won in the end. After Mr Tearle's really magnificent tirade a young exquisite in the foyer was overheard to say: "Dashed thirsty job that fellah's got, what?" That's the worst of your desert; it destroys the actor utterly. Poor Mr Tearle and poor Miss Titheradge! I imagine that at the first rehearsal they must have

> Wept like anything to see
> Such quantities of sand.

Daddalums.—Daddalums! "Melancholy trisyllable of sound, unison to Nincompoop and every

name vituperative under heaven." Would not Mr Shandy have demanded whether we had ever remembered, whether we had ever read, or even whether we had ever heard tell of a man called Daddalums performing anything great or worth recording? What's in a name? A good deal in real life, and everything on the stage. *Daddalums* is a feeble little play, but at least it does honestly according to its lights, and should not be handicapped at birth. It does not propound one problem and solve another. It is a straightforward and sincere little essay on prodigal fathers, and has given London a chance to see once more that ever-delightful Mr Ernest Hendrie, the careful and conscientious Miss Edyth Olive, and that great and noble actor, Mr Louis Calvert. You see in this unshaven, loose-braced, gibbous-membered shoemaker plentiful traces of the grand tradition of classical acting. It is all kept wonderfully to key, and the subdued yet resonant "If I had a million knees I'd go down on every one of them," is full of the true joy of the theatre. It is the havering of a loose-witted pantaloon, but it is kin to the great utterances of Lear.

French Leave.—Mr Berkeley amuses himself in *French Leave* by imagining what might have happened if the fascinating wife of a jealous Brigade-Major had found her way to the mess-room of a brigade resting out of the Line. It is all machine-made, but the play is saved by a

magnificent piece of comic acting by Mr M. R. Morand. Those who have experience of elderly brigadiers will not fail to recognise the choler, punctiliousness and childlike innocence of matters other than professional. It is a wonderful portrait. The old boy's face glows like a lanthorn. It radiates foolishness. Ghosts of feeble ideas flicker across his countenance to be absorbed in the self-sufficiency of the martinet. His pointless, senile gallantry, the raking-together of the embers of youth are splendidly done. For his model the actor has seized with fiendish glee upon the present-day successor to the antiquated colonel in *Patience*, and perhaps he has also read that astonishing French comment upon our distinguished soldiers, *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*. Miss Rénée Kelly's broken English was rather staggering. She pretended to be a Frenchwoman trying to talk our language, whereas nothing was ever more like an Englishwoman trying to talk theirs, and succeeding very prettily.

At the Villa Rose.—Brevity is the soul of other things than wit. It is the soul of the dramatic thrill, for example. *At the Villa Rose* is a dull shocker. The author takes up the whole of a very long first act to tell the audience that an old lady is a dabbler in spiritualism, that her maid wants to murder her for her jewels, and that it is going to be done during a *séance*. As the preparatory quarters of an hour succeeded each

other and dragged their slow lengths along "the suspense of the author became unbearable." Mr A. E. W. Mason must have groaned in agony for a full hour before allowing anything to happen in his play. And then how bad the acting! First there is Mr Arthur Bourchier, breezy, genial, the English country gentleman all over, and never for one second getting near the temperament or mentality of a Frenchman. That Mr Bourchier is a great actor and *can* play a Frenchman those who remember him in *The Red Robe* will know. But nowadays he no longer condescends to act. He is on the stage with his company, but he is in no sense of them. He pays only superficial heed to what is being said and done about him. His attention is concentrated on the wrong side of the footlights. He talks to *us*, cracks jokes for our benefit and not for the amusement of his proper world. He does not create the smallest particle of illusion. Miss Kyrle Bellew is, on the other hand, in the most deadly earnest. She is apprehensive of her part, which is a sign of becoming modesty, but her range of expression is small and her acting generally is not devoid of a certain quality of lumpy sadness—in the pastry sense. She does not appear to have had very much stage experience, and probably a succession of small parts would be very helpful to her. At present she has no variety of expression and voice, and only one gesture, that of continually picking and twisting her fingers.

Why will people on the stage endeavour to persuade us that they are French by talking broken English? It is as though a white actor should try to convince us that he is a black man by saying "Massa Iago, Othello no jealous, no sah!" Why is the comic fooling of the French magistrate and *commissaire* permitted? They were deplorable figures of farce. Why should a Frenchman say "That jumps to the eyes" in one minute, and then show himself so conversant with idiomatic English as to talk of the fat being in the fire the next? And where is the Roo Santonory?

The Storm.—To be perfectly fair to young actors it should be remembered that it is difficult for them to go beyond their allotted scope. In modern plays the actors are not asked to do more than behave or misbehave as their prototypes may be observed to do in street and restaurant. They are asked with fantastic rudeness to "be themselves." In *The Storm* Mr Bourchier is not ordered by his playwright to "be himself." It may be presumed that in private life this actor is not a backwoodsman; on the stage he is therefore compelled to play at being one, to exercise the functions of his craft. In other words, in this play, Mr Bourchier acts. It may be presumed, too, that Miss Kyrle Bellew is not the daughter of a French squatter inhabiting a primeval forest in the far North-West. But neither is she the cook turned *grande*

amoureuse of another play, nor the young lady in the melodrama who was accustomed to being gagged and bound at spiritualistic *séances*. And yet on the stage there is not an atom of difference between all three impersonations except, perhaps, that the actress wears different dresses and, as a Frenchwoman, pronounces "lune" as though it were "loon," and "plume" as though it were the English word of like spelling. (No Frenchwoman, whatever her education, mispronounces her vowels.) Manette is "wild and primitive," says somebody. Actually she is about as aboriginal as the young lady of the milk jug in *School*. She cannot conceive why the villain should enter her bedroom at dead of night, but left alone with the rationless hero in the middle of the far North-West, what she asks the retrieving Redskin to send them is not food but a priest. She also babbles throughout the play in the third person—"Manette lonely. Manette do what big man tell her," etc. etc. Critic could have wrung Manette's neck with pleasure.

A Safety Match.—The success of Mr Ian Hay's *A Safety Match* at the Strand should give the hypercritical pause. Your highbrow might object that to provoke a colliery accident and entomb half the cast to mend a lovers' tiff, is to use an overwhelming cause to produce an insignificant effect. Or that only fragile-minded young ladies consult their lapdogs as to choice of husbands. Or decamp to Egypt when the little brute is run

over and the big brute declines to send to town for a specialist. Or that the extra-large ruffian, held to his knees by Mr Arthur Bourchier's compelling left forefinger whilst that doughty gentleman threatens to throw two more ruffians over the balustrade with his right, is not really trying. Or that not even popular actors rush off to effect a rescue in Number X cutting without first getting out of their evening clothes. But there be those who abandon all sense of foolishness when they enter a theatre, and it is perhaps more blessed to rejoice with them that rejoice than to carp at the cause of their rejoicing. So Hay ho, and a Hay nonny no!

Mr R. H. Hignett's picture of well-intentioned futility is admirable, but then the character is admirably drawn. Miss Ena Grossmith brings to the part of a pert little vixen a keen sense of the ridiculous, some feeling for the stage and an inherited trick of looking sidelong down her nose like a mediæval saint in vicious contemplation. She reminded me of the virginal Saint Catherine ravished by the posters of the Palais Royal. But I dislike the staging of the *enfant détestable*. The wilful throwing-over of all beauty and manners in favour of a precocity and gracelessness both physical and moral must necessarily constitute a bad apprenticeship for the young artist. Caliban and not Ariel is the end.

The Prude's Fall.—The Prude's Fall is exasperating. Mr Rudolph Besier and Miss May

Edington have spent some three hours in drawing up a terrific poser. What is a man to do who forces his *fiancée* to become his mistress without hope of marriage—this to punish her for past social snobbishness—when he finds a pistol levelled at him by a second lover, who gives him five minutes to clear out or be shot? Well there are two solutions: Either (*a*) to clear out, or (*b*) to be shot. What he must *not* do is to produce a special licence and say he was "only pretending." This is what he actually does, and this it is which suggests that the play is only fit to be performed before an audience of babies and people who have no interest in logic and sequence of ideas. The play covers a good deal of weary, old ground in the usual intellectually dishonest fashion. May a woman who has "sinned"—I believe that is the jargon—eat crumpets in the same drawing-room as the Vicar's wife? Another woman who has "sinned" is held up as an awful example because her lover died and left her without a penny. It is not explained why this should be an awful warning to a woman with obviously ten thousand a year. The authors miss the whole point about Society women, which is that they don't in the least mind receiving a woman who has kicked over the traces. What they are afraid of is what the other women will think of them if they do receive her.

Mr Du Maurier goes through his part exactly as a conjurer goes through his bag of tricks. But then this actor is a deft and admirable

conjurer. He has in his bag a little passion and a little restraint, an enormous amount of charm, nonchalance, imperturbability when he is in danger, and even when he isn't. But the part has not caused the actor one moment's emotion or thought. It came out of his bag like that because Mr Du Maurier is that sort of conjurer.

The Wandering Jew.—If you hanker after a semi-Biblical story, a darkened stage, incense, love-making combined with mysticism and bunkum, delights of apotheosis and a glimpse of Mr Matheson Lang roasting at the stake—then in *The Wandering Jew* you have your heart's desire. Personally, I like mysticism to be mysticism and facts facts, and can make little of a gentleman who wanders the earth in successive incarnations, always complaining that he can't die and yet having, so far as I can see, a thoroughly good time of it. I am not moved to reverence by Mr E. Temple Thurston's prose style, compounded half of St Paul, half of the obituary column, freely seasoned to taste with Ella Wheeler Wilcox. There is no vigour here, merely slabs of commonplace idea smeared over with second-hand expression. Mr Matheson Lang takes himself with immense seriousness, but so did the late Wilson Barrett in *The Sign of the Cross.* His performance badly needs a spark or two of humanity, I suppose I must not say of humour. He used to be much more amusing as Mr Wu.

For the Purposes of Revenue

Daniel.—Misconduct is certainly three parts of *Daniel.* Daniel is a sick man whose malady one instinctively diagnoses as moral. Harking back to Baudelaire, Huysmans, Jean Lorrain and our own Yellow Book, he is an echo of the greenery-yallery heroes of the nineties. In love with his brother's wife, he proposes to die in aromatic pain of opium, Chinese idols, black velvet, and the whole caboodle of decadent flummery. The plot of the play won't bear thinking about outside the theatre, and won't let you think of anything else inside, from which you may deduce that it is a very good plot indeed. It would not be surprising if the success of this play were to induce Sir Arthur Pinero to sit up and take theatrical notice again. Give "our foremost playwright" the daggers—that is to say the bundle of compromising letters, the dope-motive and the self-sacrificing noodle—and he would let daylight into these dummies as well as another. But probably none of Sir Arthur's lovers would make up to his mistress under pretence of being engaged to that lady's little sister from school. This is not good English Pineroics but bad French Pinerotics, and we are to reflect that the author could not help being born a Frenchman.

The Daniel of Mr Claude Rains is a magnificent piece of decadent nonsense modelled on the text of *A Rebours*, the frontispiece to *Monsieur de Phocas* and the jewelled canvases of Moreau. That the actor may deny these sources of inspiration is not going to affect the

argument. His study in morbidity has just that quality of unhealthy radiance which Huysmans invented for the sick imaginings of Des Esseintes, the bloom of some monstrous tumour, the pattern of some corroding cancer. There is colour in it too, the fire of thwarted rubies as well as the pallor of ineffectual lilies. In the sad sweetness of this invalid there is corruption. If Mr Rains can inform any heroic or even respectable character with half the beauty he imparts to this glowing presentation of the abnormal, then he is a good actor. Mr Lyn Harding plays the bull-necked husband with the valiance of a hundred beeves, Mr C. Aubrey Smith the *raisonneur* with the tact of a hundred Wyndhams. Mr Leslie Faber and Miss Alexandra Carlisle are as good as good can be. Why they cut out Daniel's dying speech and confession, by which so many Parisian hearts were melted, I cannot for the life of me imagine. Did they not trust Mr Rains to play the woman? Or was there too great a danger of Daniel bagging the lion's share? Let Mr Rains take comfort. He played everybody else off the stage, and the omission of Sarah Bernhardt's great scene made nonsense of the end of the play. This was first-class poetic justice.

L'Epervier.—M. André Brulé has been called the *matinée* idol of Paris. This is a libel. M. Brulé is a fine and accomplished actor. He has what all French and so few English players possess—a feeling for tone and rhythm. The

long duel between him and Mademoiselle Madeleine Lély in the second act could be listened to with pleasure even by people ignorant of French; these actors deliver the cut and thrust as though it were part-writing for the voice. They have a feeling for words and a sense of their proper balance; gesture, intonation and emotion are naturally related and not spikily superimposed, as is our way. When an English *jeune premier* has to deal with a sentence longer than "Not so much sand, boy!" or "Niblick, please!" he is hopelessly at sea, whereas M. Brulé can manage the surge, roll and groundswell. Mademoiselle Lély does nothing badly, but nothing particularly well, and her fussy, well-intentioned Countess is not a patch on the taut, emotional impersonation of Mademoiselle Vera Sergine, who played the part in Paris. She wears beautiful but inappropriate gowns. Seen from the stalls they are indistinguishable, all fringes and frippery, without line. It is really rather absurd to take a broken-down, penniless lover, not to a bosom of repentance, but to a silly little tippet and muff. And not very far short of nonsense to talk emigration in mid-winter in a skirt half-way to the floor.

The plot of this French play is interesting in the light it throws on comparative morality. A gentleman cheats at cards for his living, being driven thereto by want. Want, he explains, consists in the absence of *real* money; his wife's jewels being worth no more than eleven hundred

thousand francs—roughly, when the play was written, about £44,000. So he forces his wife to cheat too. She falls in love with another young gentleman and decides to cheat no more. They go away together; the husband takes to drugs, and, no longer playing at the card-table, is reduced to want. It appears that he only cheated for his wife's sake and *because he loved her*. So she comes back to her husband, and together they go out to manage an ostrich farm, or something of the sort, at a salary of some four thousand a year provided by a charitable millionaire. So we see that, in France, it is moral for a husband to cheat at cards, provided he does it for love; and moral for a wife to run away, provided she runs back again. M. Brulé made these unrealities intensely exciting and pathetic. I cannot imagine any of our *matinée* idols who would not have been just silly.

A Matter of Fact.—Compare the Englishman's favourite method of writing a play which shall be moral, instructive, amusing and anodynous. He begins by taking a problem to which there can by no possibility be a happy ending, and then proceeds to find one by a system which I shall call the "all-along" system. A young gentleman from Eton wants to marry a heathen Chinee. So discovers that the maiden "all-along" was no Chinee at all, but a kidnapped English peeress in her own right. A scoundrel forces a woman to run off with him to social perdition, with the

result that a pistol is put to his head. He pulls out a brace of marriage lines to prove that "all-along" he never meant it. What is a baronet's wife to do who discovers that her daughter is engaged to marry a young man whom she had the misfortune to bring into the world before she met the baronet? Does she take a tip from the *Valkyrie* and say nothing? Does she tell her daughter, her son, her husband, her best friend and then commit a decent, unavailing suicide? In *A Matter of Fact* the poor lady tells pretty well everybody, only to find that the boy wasn't her son after all and, therefore, "all-along" never had been. So the world wags, and so we think ourselves a nation of playwrights.

The Great Lover.—The theme of *The Great Lover* is the old one of the actor and the artistic temperament. The play deals not with the genuine artist but with the mountebank and charlatan who dog their divine brother. The plot of the play is taken from that ridiculous world of impresarios, prima and secunda donnas, Italian tenors exhaling infamy and garlic, Press-agents, hangers-on, clowns and drabs. Tawdry love-affairs jostle absurd susceptibilities; promiscuity, greed and vanity are rife; the mentality current is that of a child of four. The zany in the garb of genius. "These artists deceive themselves. Perched upon their high horse, they still believe their feet touch earth. They juggle with a show of innocence, vanity is in their blood;

they are born into this world clowns and braggarts, extravagant in outlook as a Chinese vase; they are capable even of self-mockery. Conti will have you believe that he is heaven-inspired, that for him art is sacred and sacrosanct. His eloquence seems to spring from deep conviction; his scorn of Society is sublime. He is prophet, demon, angel, deity. Yet this Southerner's ardent spirit is dank as the bottom of a well. To hear him, the artist is a disciple, art a religion with its priests and martyrs. Once launched upon his theme he will out-belch a German philosopher. You admire his convictions—yet he has none. You soar with him to some seventh heaven—yet, enfolding you in a look of ecstasy and cocking an eye at your beatitude, he is wondering: 'Am I their God?'"

This is Balzac three-quarters of a century ago; he could not better have described the Jean Paurel of this play. I have not for many years seen so faithful a portrait nor so clever a piece of comic acting as this of Moscovitch. This sentimental gormandiser wears his appetite on his sleeve; his accent and his intonations betray his origin, his temper, his cast of thought. But this is bare competence. You feel that you must catalogue the fine beauties that go to make up the great actor—the nobility of pose, the carriage, the courage—almost you might say the pluck of a horse. Here is mettle to try a tragic fall, and you go back in your mind to the wonderful gestures, their wealth and number, now

elucidating, now reinforcing, now eloquent on their own account. Mr Moscovitch is a born actor —a vastly different thing from that poor affair, the made one. He has no Saxon inhibitions. He talks as a foreigner talks, with every organ of the body. He has power, pathos and humour, but then so has every little Italian *musico*. There are hundreds of Paurels; Moscovitch is like them all. Acting is an affair of the blood; it is in every foreign race. I do not know this particular actor's nationality. This is the first time I have seen him, but judging not so much from this performance as from its implications he is a great comic actor. He is a trifle stagey, they say. Well, heaven be thanked!

The Grain of Mustard Seed.—"As for jest," writes the great essayist, "there be certain things which ought to be privileged from it; namely, Religion, Matters of State, Great Persons, any man's present business of importance . . . ; yet there be some that think their wits have been asleep, except they dart out somewhat that is piquant, and to the quick; that is a vein which should be bridled." The wit of *The Grain of Mustard Seed* had been the better for a bridle, though there is so little of this commodity in the theatre to-day that the temptation is to give it its head. The conflict lies between the idealism of a private member and the opportunism of a cabinet of trimmers. We are to believe that such of our politicians as are not fools must

necessarily be knaves. Now the statement that "those who choose their time well are called statesmen; those who choose it badly are called traitors," is both cynical and untrue. No politician ever ruled this country—Disraeli magnificently excepted, but he was a Jew, and therefore had genius—who did not possess at least the quality of self-deception, the faculty of holding one opinion on Monday and its opposite on Tuesday, and both at white heat and with the utmost fury of conviction. That is what makes politics so amusing. Mr Harwood's picture of a lick-spittle Prime Minister consciously blowing hot and cold, of a leader of the House furtively hedging like some queasy bookmaker, of a cretin, and an idealist whose political faith is bred of his belief in a baby food—has the author never heard of Tono-Bungay and the kind of conviction quackery inspires? — all these preposterous caricatures will not do; not even as satire. These are not politicians as we know them, nor as we are willing to laugh at them. They are the sweepings of a Westminster Bridge omnibus.

All this would not matter if the play were full of brilliant, heady nonsense or meaty, satisfying talk. The suggestion has been made that it contains epigrams to outwit Congreve, Sheridan, and the rest. One cannot, perhaps, do better than quote. "Imagination is what fellows have who write for the papers." "I'd rather go to hell on my own feet than be wheeled to heaven in a perambulator." "A boa-constrictor does a

lot of swallowing before it swallows a sheep!" Shades of Sheridan and Wilde, and very present spirits of Sir J. M. Barrie and Mr Shaw! The truth of the matter is that we moderns too easily lose our heads. As soon as a playwright aims higher than mere horse-play he is hailed as a master of wit, or kind of super-Grock; which is as much as to say that everything which is not written by a scullery-maid must of necessity be letters, and good letters into the bargain. Molière tried his comedies on his cook, but we are not told that he got her to turn Alceste's phrases for him. "C'est n'estimer rien qu'estimer tout le monde." You cheapen the world of letters when you put Jack on a level with the great masters.

The great defect of the play is that whereas the main issue is political satire, the interest of the audience is allowed to devolve upon an irrelevant problem of sentiment. What is an elderly man to do whose *fiancée* tells him that she engaged herself to him for his money and that she has been the mistress of a younger man? Mr Norman McKinnel, the political frog who would a-wooing go, had a difficult problem to solve, and he solved it by just not dealing with it. Always so good in a fighting part, he was not allowed stomach for this particular fray. You expected him to round on the lady with some little remark about roasting her in sulphur. But, no! Mr Harwood leaves Mr McKinnel without a word. The stage direction may be that the actor's eyes

should burst from their sockets. But we are not to know this, and the actor stands stock-still in flabbergasted contemplation of sun, moon and stars fallen amazingly about him. He has even forgotten all about the election, which was the main issue of the play. He waves the figures aside; they should have voted hereafter. The problem as to what the elderly gentleman should do is left unsolved. "There you 'ave me!"—the remark of the chauffeur in the play—seemed to be the popular solution.

A Happy Commentator

For if the king like not the comedy,
Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy.
Hamlet, Act iii., sc. 2.

ON a late summer evening in Cornwall I came across one of those man-made institutions to which all that is glorious in sun, sky, sea, fisher-smack and fisher-folk must in the mind of the bookish give place—a musty village book-shop. The dealer in other men's brains, criminal at second-hand, accessory after the publisher's fact, had the tact not to push his wares. With a wave of his hand he made me free of the shop and stood, the only other occupant, his nose buried in a pile of books, an unusual attitude for a dealer therein. After considerable sidelong scrutiny and persuaded that I had come not to chatter but to browse, he raised his head and, indicating a pile of well-preserved books, broke silence. "A gentleman's library," he vouchsafed. "Bought it this afternoon as it stood. Mostly first editions. A gentleman to look at him. And understood books to look at them." I glanced at the pile incuriously enough. One knows those "gentlemen's libraries," unadventurous bundles of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, George Eliot, a hundred and twenty "safe" volumes, with never an indiscretion, never a rampageous book that might, at some visitor's knock, have to be tucked into the back of the sofa. Equally one knows those miasmatic, emasculated collections, scandals long laid to rest and now piggishly uprooted, which are the bed-books of the modern *petit-maître*.

This collection was after neither of these kinds, but remarkable in two ways. Not only was it composed of books proper to a gentleman's library, but it contained none improper thereto. By "gentleman" I mean one who to his dying day will take in *The Field*. The late owner had, apparently, bought his Hardys, Merediths, Kiplings, Moores and so on as they came out, had read and inwardly digested them. But what is to my immediate purpose is that he had outwardly marked one of them, an entertaining, pragmatical book by a great writer. I do not think I should have been bullied into buying all this library, useless duplication of volumes at home, had it not been for *The Author's Craft*. It has always been a fancy of mine that there are holes in every great man's armour. *Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit*, as the Royal and Ancient Order of Buffaloes reminds us.[1] This particular annotator would appear to have discovered that not even Mr Arnold Bennett is at all hours wise, to have put his eyes to some hard-perceived chinks in the shining mail and to have rammed his pencil home. *Clap-trap*, *mon bon Arnauld*! was too enticing.

All or none was the bookseller's ultimatum, and wanting the Bennett as I did, I became the possessor of this little "gentleman's library." I sold all the first editions and replaced those I had not by commoner copies, with the result that an excellent holiday cost next to nothing. Under

[1] I am betraying no secret. He who runs into his publican's may read the motto for himself, in framed "sustificate" hanging on the snuggery wall.

my bed are dozens of remainder copies of first editions of an author too little known. Would it be sound economics to burn them in the hopes of a demand for an odd volume provoking the publisher to a second impression?

I had always looked upon *The Author's Craft* as an excellent book, with at least thirty-two ounces of common-sense to the pound. Again in complete agreement did I read the early pages, including, on page 37, the passage: "And you can see primitive novelists to this day transmitting to acquaintances their fragmentary and crude visions of life in the café or the club, or on the curbstone. They belong to the lowest circle of artists; and the form that they adopt is the very basis of the novel. By innumerable entertaining steps from them you may ascend to the major artists whose vision of life, inclusive, intricate and intense, requires for its due transmission the great traditional form of the novel as perfected by the masters of a long age which has temporarily set the novel higher than any other art form." With what consternation then, did I read in the margin: *The first idea in this book worth recording.* Again on page 40, I read: "Wherever the novel ought to stand in the hierarchy of forms, it has, actually, no rival at the present day as a means for transmitting the impassioned vision of life. It is, and will be for some time to come, the form to which the artist with the most inclusive vision instinctively turns, because it is the most inclusive form, and the most adaptable.

Indeed, before we are much older, if its present rate of progress continues, it will have reoccupied the dazzling position to which the mighty Balzac lifted it, and in which he left it in 1850. So much, by the way, for the rank of the novel." Only to be dashed in my appreciation by the comment: *Forty pages to get to this hoary truth. God forgive the author!* [1]

Mr Bennett continues: "A great novelist must have great qualities of mind. His mind must be sympathetic, quickly responsive, courageous, honest, humorous, tender, just, merciful. He must be able to conceive the ideal without losing sight of the fact that it is a human world we live in." To this is attached a discouraging: *This might have been written by a professor of English in a seminary for the Daughters of Gentlemen.* Lower down on the page: "Above all, the novelist's mind must be permeated and controlled by common-sense. His mind, in a word, must have the quality of being noble. Unless his mind is all this, he will never, at the ultimate bar, be reckoned supreme." This, too, is damned: *Whoever found platitude more perfectly expressed?* My unknown commentator dissents from the verdict on Thackeray, "whose mind was somewhat incomplete for so grandiose a figure, and

[1] I know of only one other instance of comment as blasting as this. It occurs in a second-hand copy, picked up in the Charing Cross Road, of a handbook purporting to elucidate the Einstein theory of relativity. On the last page, in a firm, decided handwriting, are the words: "*Pure nonsense!*" to which initials and a date lend a charming air of finality. But I should dearly like to know whether this little outburst is the result of mathematical conviction or of High Church irritation at such a breaking in upon woolly rapture.

not free from defects which are inimical to immortality." *Ah! but think of Esmond, the Great Emotional Autumn!* On the other hand, "What undermines the renown of Dickens is the growing conviction that the texture of his mind was common, that he fell short in courageous facing of the truth, and in certain delicacy of perception," finds the commentator in full agreement.

It is amusing to hold the scales between author and commentator and, on the whole, I am inclined to think that it is the former who comes off the better. "Balzac was a prodigious blunderer. He could not even manage a sentence, not to speak of the general form of a book. And as for a greater than Balzac—Stendhal—his scorn of technique was notorious. Stendhal was capable of writing, in a masterpiece: 'By the way I ought to have told you earlier that the Duchess . . .' As for a greater than either Balzac or Stendhal—Dostoievsky—what a hasty, amorphous lump of gold is the sublime, the unapproachable *Brothers Karamazov*!" This is first-class criticism and is not demolished by the marginal: *Oh, fie! Arnold Bennett!* "And when we come to consider the great technicians, Guy de Maupassant and Flaubert, can we say that their technique will save them, or atone in the slightest degree for the defects of their minds? Exceptional artists both, they are both now inevitably falling in esteem to the level of the second-rate. Human nature being what it is, and Guy de Maupassant being tinged with

eroticism, his work is sure to be read with interest by mankind, but he is already classed. Nobody, now, despite all his brilliant excellences, would dream of putting de Maupassant with the first magnitudes. And the declension of Flaubert is one of the outstanding phenomena of modern French criticism." This, thanks be to all the critical gods, is justly punctated with a three-fold: *Mon Dieu! Pauvre ami!* and *Le style, c'est l'homme, mon bon Arnauld!* However, on the next page: "Assuredly no great artist was ever a profound scholar. The great artist has other ends to achieve." This is marked: *Good! Good! The real Bennett at last,* and the rest of the chapter has the note: *Oh! how fine!*

Half-way through the little volume our commentator becomes a trifle disjointed, as though he were following not so much the text as a thesis of his own. There are some illuminative flashes. *Hugo's is an "event-plot" of the most beastly type! Naturalism was discovered by Zola and is as dead as mutton; Compton Mackenzie survives! I, too, have for years said that first-class fiction must be in its final resort autobiographical, but none would believe me!* And then the markings and the underlinings peter out and it looks as though our unknown friend had not persevered. But half-a-dozen pages from the end we are reassured, most joyously. For there, in reference to a possible novel by Pinero, is the lambent: *Good God!* What comment to make on this happiest of commentators!

THE END